

LABOUR PROBLEMS IN THE SUGAR INDUSTRY  
OF ILE DE FRANCE OR MAURITIUS 1790-1842.

BY

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## FOREWORD

I would like to sincerely thank Dr. Peter Wickins, who supervised this thesis, for his advice and stimulating criticism. The views expressed here however, are entirely my own.

Thanks are also due to the Human Sciences Research Council and to the University of Cape Town for financial assistance.

In a sense this thesis is a family effort. Special thanks to my wife Maria for her patience and understanding, to my sister Shirley for selflessly typing the thesis, and to my mother who summarized passenger lists and did the photocopying.

Durban,  
September, 1978.

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Note: The passages quoted in this thesis have been left in their original form. Where the meaning is not clear an English translation has been provided in brackets. It was decided to leave out sics since spelling errors and grammatical mistakes by present day norms, more often than not, reflect contemporary usage.

## INTRODUCTION

### 1. Ile de France before 1790.

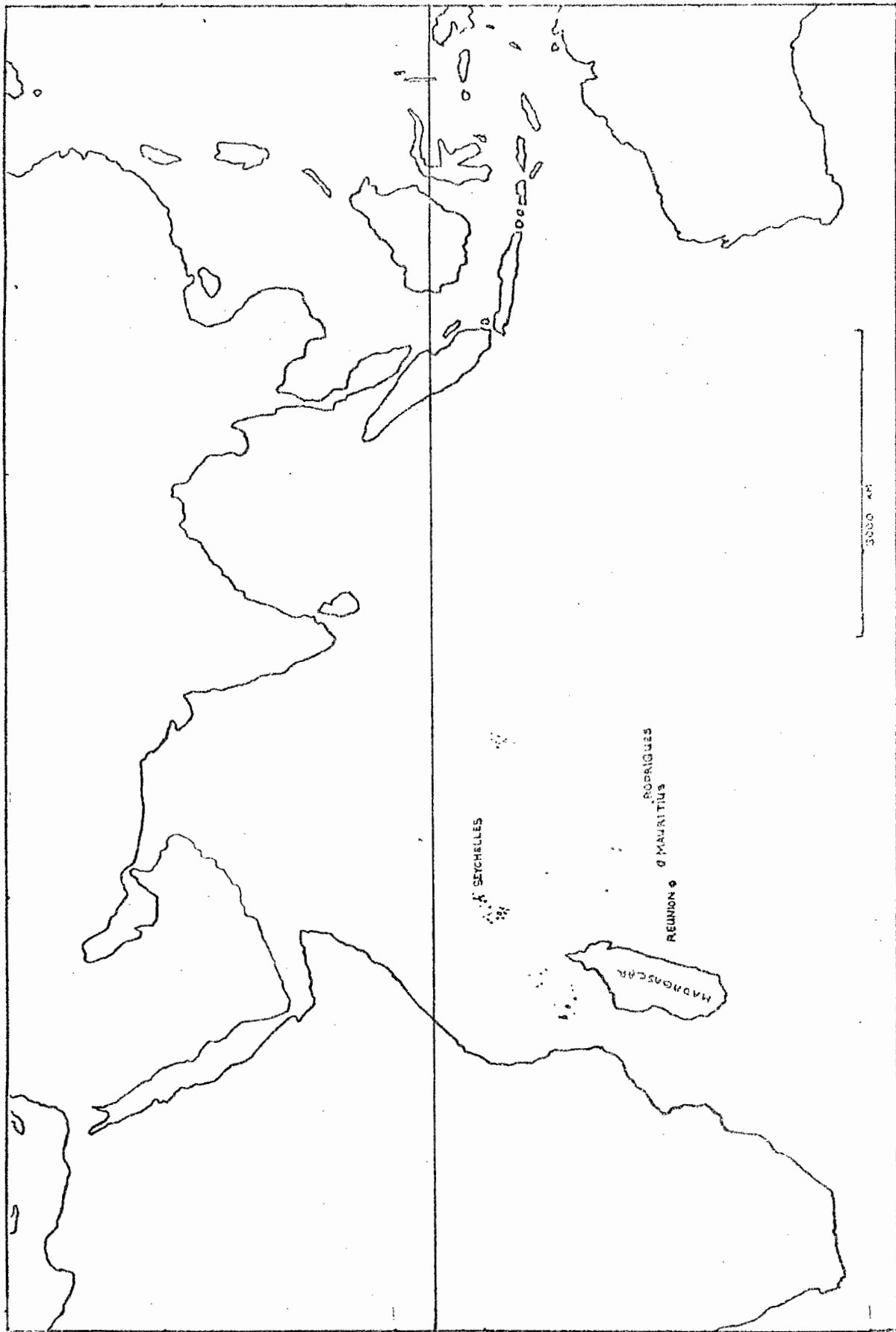
The island of Mauritius is situated in the south-western Indian Ocean between  $19^{\circ}58'$ ,  $20^{\circ}32'$  south latitude and  $57^{\circ}18'$ ,  $57^{\circ}49'$  east longitude. The nearest landmass of any considerable extent is Madagascar which lies some 900 km due west of Mauritius; but there are a number of islands and islets in the vicinity, notably Réunion, Rodrigues and the Cargados Carajos, which together with Mauritius constitute the archipelago of the Mascarenes. (1) (cf Map 1)

Before the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Mascarenes were uninhabited. There is no evidence of any human settlement on the islands prior to that time but their existence may well have been known to Arab navigators since they feature on the Cantino Portalono drawn up in 1502 at the latest, or some five years at least before European discovery. The map was based on information obtained from Arab pilots and this is reflected in the names attached to the islands: Dina Margabim, Dina Arobi, Dina Moraze. Visdelou-Gimbeau has pointed out that Dina is a corruption of the sanscrit 'dwipa' which means 'islands'. (2)

No man-made structures or artifacts have been found in the Mascarenes to indicate that there was even a temporary settlement prior to the age of European expansion overseas; but evidence from natural history suggests that the islands may have been visited accidentally by the Malayo-Polynesia people who settled in Madagascar nearly a thousand years ago.

In all likelihood these travellers introduced the Pandanus palm tree or screw-pine originating from Sumatra, and the land-tortoise, both exotic to the Mascarenes. (3)

Réunion is believed to have been discovered by the fleet of Diogo Lopez de Siqueira, possibly in 1509. Mauritius was found by the pilot Domingos Fernandez in December, 1511. In 1512 Pero Mascarenhas is reported to have sighted Réunion and although he was not the original discoverer of that island it was renamed Mascarin after him, the term being extended later to embrace the whole archipelago.



Map 1 The Mascarenes

Until recently it was thought that Rodrigues island, the third largest of the Mascarenes, had been discovered by Diogo Rodriguez between 1532 and 1534, (4) but G.A. North-Coombes has now shown, from cartographic and other evidence, that Rodriguez in fact discovered the island that was to bear his name early in 1528. (5)

The Portuguese did not settle in the Mascarenes. The islands possessed no valuable spices or precious metals. Thalassocracies, such as those that the Portuguese and the Dutch established in Asia, had no need for agricultural settlements except in so far as it proved necessary to establish ports-of-call, where sailing ships could water, provision and refit. But the Mascarenes lay outside the Portuguese route to India. This route followed the pattern established by the expeditions of da Gama and Cabral at the turn of the 15<sup>th</sup> century, hugging the East African coast until Malindi, where pilots and supplies were obtainable, thence going across the Indian Ocean initially to Calicut and later to Goa, in India. (6) At the start of the 17<sup>th</sup> century the Dutch inaugurated a new sea route to the Indies by sailing directly from the Cape of Good Hope to the Sunda Strait and the Java sea beyond, but this new route came no closer to the Mascarenes. The Dutch has established " the cardinal principle of navigation in the Southern Indian Ocean - that of 'running the easting down' in the thirties or forties of south latitude, before shaping north to catch the trade wind for Java or India; a principle which held until the last days of sail. " (7)

In the 1630's however the Dutch elected to establish a settlement in the Mascarenes. There were several reasons for this. In the first place there were fears that foreign nations, whose vessels had visited the islands intermittently before then to load cargoes of valuable ebony wood (*Diospyros Melanida*), would establish a permanent presence in the region. This was unacceptable to the Dutch East India Company as it threatened the commercial hegemony which it sought to establish in the Indian Ocean. The Dutch had a claim to Mauritius dating back to 1598 when five ships under the command of Vice-Admiral Wybrandt van Warwijck called at the island which they named in honour of the head of the House of Orange, Stadtholder Maurice of Nassau. (8)

Dutch settlement in the Mascarenes was primarily part of their strategy of empire-building in the east but there were secondary considerations behind it as well. The islands were situated close to Madagascar whence Batavia had been supplied with slaves since 1623, and it was hoped to use the Mascarenes as a transit point for slaves and salt beef from the 'Great Island' for the Dutch settlements in the East Indies (9). The islands themselves were not devoid of commercial advantages. There were valuable hardwoods in the extensive forests, fresh water was available as well as an abundance of game in the forests. Literally thousands of land-tortoises provided a ready supply of meat for would-be colonists as well as for the crews of calling ships. (10)

The Dutch occupied Mauritius in May 1638, forty years after Warwijck's landing. The Dutch East India Company had intended to occupy Mascarin and Rodrigues as well; but it was found that neither of the last-mentioned islands offered a safe anchorage. Mauritius on the other hand had two excellent natural harbours, in the south-east, where the first Dutch fleet had landed in 1598, and in the north-west, an anchorage used by Admirals Etienne van der Hagen and Cornelius Matelief de Jonge in January 1606. (11)

The Dutch choice of Mauritius, even if largely fortuitous, had been a wise one, for of all the islands in the Mascarenes it was that best suited for colonial settlement. Mauritius' greatest length is 62 km, its greatest breadth 45 km.

With an area of 1852 km<sup>2</sup> it is slightly smaller than Réunion (area 2512 km<sup>2</sup>) but it has a much larger extent of cultivable land than its mountainous neighbour. Both islands are volcanic in origin. Two distinct volcanic phases can be identified in the geology of Mauritius. The first, or 'older' volcanic phase coincided with the end of the Cretaceous period and gave rise to the three mountain ranges and the isolated peaks on the island's periphery. The second, more recent 'younger' phase occurred in a further two stages during the Tertiary period and at its close. Lava flows from the second phase built up the two central plateaus. The lower plateau is a fairly level plain sloping gently to the sea from an altitude of about 550 m. Level or near level ground is found especially in the north and east of the island where the great permeability of the soil

has limited erosion. In the south and west on the other hand, the upper dissected plateau falls abruptly to a narrow coastal plain. It has been estimated that as much as 86% of the land area of Mauritius is suitable for cultivation. (12) (cf Map 2)

The soils of the island were formed from the decomposition of igneous rocks. They retain many of the chemical properties of the parent lava and are therefore rich in secondary nutrients. Nitrogen, phosphate and potash are added to maintain and enhance the soil's natural fertility but even in their original state the most common soil types, the upland latosolic and latosol soils in the lowlands, are quite productive. After reviewing the main soil types of Mauritius, T. Ramdin concluded that over the greater part of the island "the soils are reasonably fertile, and respond well to proper cultivation wherever adequate supplies of water are obtainable." (13)

The island is watered by numerous streams originating from the watershed which follows the volcanic ridge, formed by a line of extinct craters, running from SSW to NNE diagonally across the island. Five of the streams are over 20 km in length but none are navigable. Estuarial erosion at the river mouths has dug channels into the fringing coral reef, which surrounds Mauritius on three sides, giving access to the deep sea beyond. This is especially significant in the case of Grand Rivière Nord Ouest and Grand Rivière Sud Est, which have opened up the entrances to the harbours of Port-Louis and Grand Port respectively, but the smaller channels are not without importance for fishing activities and for coastal communications. (14)

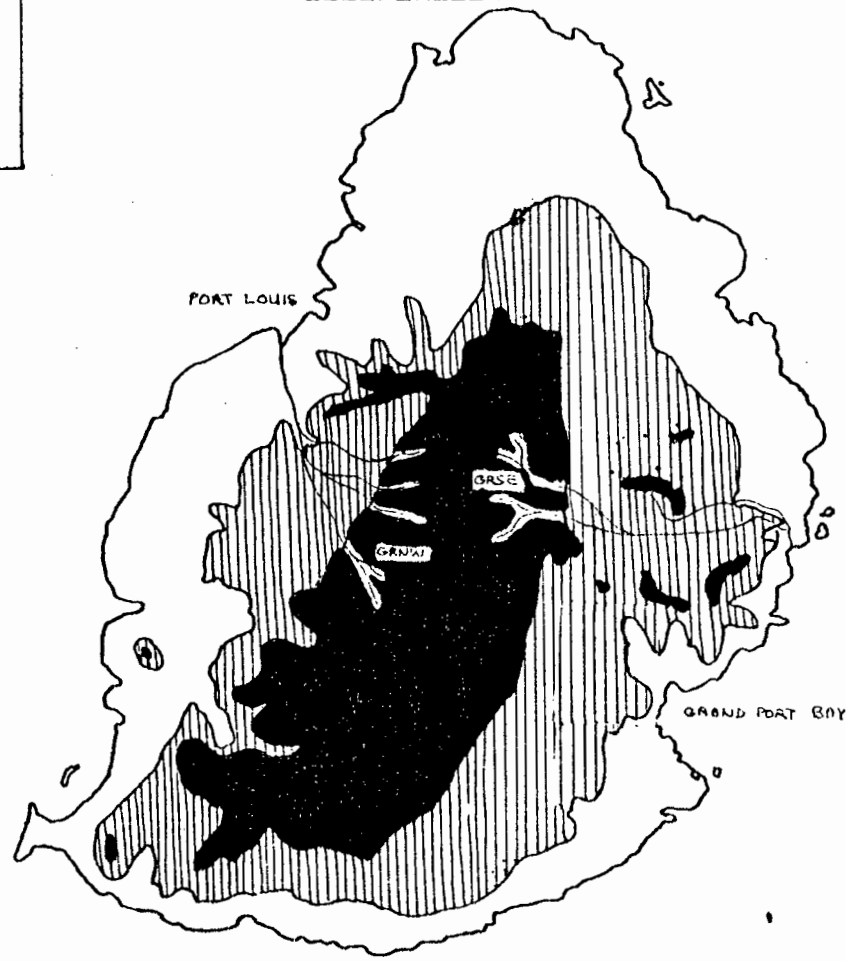
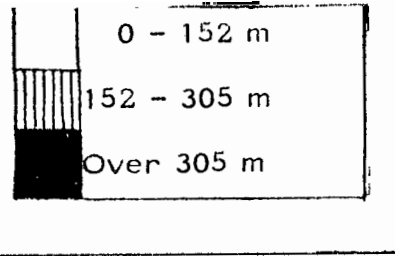
At times Mauritius has suffered from prolonged droughts, but its position in the inter-tropical cyclonic zone has normally assured it of an abundant supply of rain. Rain falls throughout the year but especially from November to May, in the summer season, when it is brought to the island by moist maritime south-easterly winds. The supply of rainfall increases whenever cyclones come within 700 km of Mauritius. These tropical storms are on occasion destructive to agriculture, as when they pass over or very near the island, but they nonetheless perform an essential function in bringing adequate rain to it during the growing season when plants require water as well as sunshine to grow. (15)

The distribution of rainfall in Mauritius is affected by the relief and by the direction of the prevailing winds, and is heavier on the eastern slopes of the central plateau than on the western slopes. Rainfall is said to have been heavier during the early years of settlement after which reckless deforestation led to an appreciable decline in precipitation in many areas. (16) But even today the drier parts of Mauritius have sufficient rain for successful agriculture. In normal years rainfall averages more than 1,02m a year over the great bulk of the island : only the extreme north and part of the west coast, south of Port Louis, have less than this. The leeward slopes and the northern coastal plain receive between 1,02m and 2,03m a year; the windward plains and slopes from 2,03m to 4,06m; and the central uplands up to 5,08m. (17) (cf Map 3)

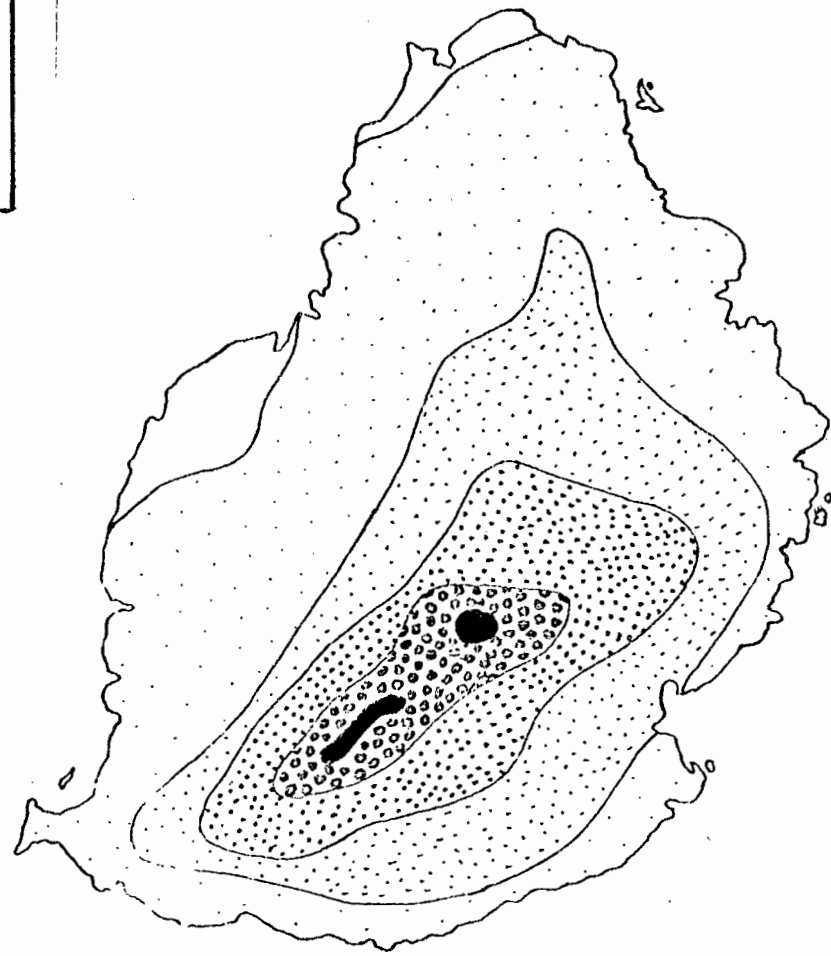
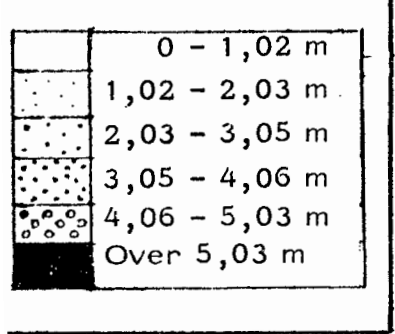
Reckless exploitation of Mauritian forest resources from an early date and the clearing of vegetation for agricultural purposes have completely changed the natural landscape of the island. From contemporary accounts and relics of the climax forests a reasonable picture of the original flora has been reconstructed. It appears that a palm savanna was found in the driest areas of the island and that the rest of it was cloaked in evergreen tropical forest, of the upland and lowland varieties. Many valuable hardwoods could be found in these forests providing the first settlers with a ready cash crop. (18)

Despite these natural advantages the Dutch were unable to make their settlement viable. The first occupation lasted only twenty years, from May 1638 to July 1658. The Dutch returned for a second time in 1664 but remained in control only until February 1710 when they left Mauritius for good (19). Traditional accounts of the Dutch failures in Mauritius have focussed on the rôle played by natural factors and other local or regional influences. Such explanations see the Dutch withdrawals largely as responses to crop failures, the insecurity created by escaped slaves in the island's interior, mediocre leadership or the small number of colonists. Yet all pioneer settlements faced similar obstacles in various parts of the world - New South Wales before Macquarie springs to mind - but these obstacles did not necessarily prevent successful colonisation elsewhere. Indeed, as Filliot put it, "la malchance n'explique pas tout" (20).

Map 2 Relief



Map 3 Rainfall



The key to understanding the Dutch lack of success in Mauritius lies in the weakness of the colonising effort. Only limited resources were poured into the Mascarenes venture and it appears that the actions of the Dutch East India Company were designed more to retard than favour colonial progress. Thus in 1640 thirty settlers arriving from Holland had to be turned away because of orders from the Governor-General of India that the colony should be limited to eighty men in size. Man-power was always wanting and the permanent population was normally below one hundred persons (21). In 1647 the slave trade to Batavia ceased. Under the governorship of Reinier Por (1648-1653) Mauritius lost importance as an ebony supplier, as the bottom fell out of the European market, and the Company limited output to 400 trees a year in an attempt to shore up prices of precious timber (22). It has been argued that the founding of a settlement at the Cape of Good Hope in 1652 led to a further decline in the value of Mauritius to the East India Company and motivated the first withdrawal which began in 1655 (23). However it should be pointed out that the Cape was not established as an alternative to Mauritius but as a replacement for St. Helena which was unable to supply sufficient foodstuff to meet the needs of Company ships. (24) Filliot has rightly argued that the evacuation of Mauritius in 1658 was partly linked to international developments. He writes: "Les raisons de cet abandon ne furent pas seulement 'régionales' ; en ce milieu du siècle les Provinces Unies eurent à fournir un effort de guerre contre l'Espagne puis contre l'Angleterre : l'énergie des Hollandais s'en ressentit dans l'Océan Indien." (25)

The second occupation of Mauritius in 1664 was motivated by a shortage of timber at the Cape. Once again the Dutch failed to make the settlement pay and in 1706 it was decided to finally abandon it. The evacuation began in September 1707 and ended in February 1710. (26)

Mauritius remained uninhabited for nearly a decade after the Dutch departure after which it was occupied by the French. (27)

The occupation of Mauritius in 1721 followed nearly eighty years of French maritime activity in the western Indian Ocean. From the time of Henri IV, French ships had called occasionally, at Madagascar and

at the Mascarenes on their way to the Indies, but it was not until 1638 that Salomon Gaubert, captain of the Alexis, laid claim to Mascarin for France. Four years later Richelieu granted a ten-year monopoly of trade and settlement in Madagascar to Rigault's 'Compagnie des Indes Orientales'. A settlement was established at Fort-Dauphin on the south-east coast of 'la Grande Isle' in 1643, and this remained the focus of the French colonising effort in the region during the next twenty years. Three half-hearted attempts were made during this period to colonise Mascarin, with exiles from Fort-Dauphin and Malagasy slaves, but they ended in failure; and it is not until 1664 that the island acquired a permanent French presence. The 1660's and 1670's were years of feverish French commercial activity in the Indian Ocean. Under Colbert's initiative Rigault's company of 1642 was replaced by a new 'Compagnie des Indes Orientales' in 1664. Posts were founded at Sainte-Marie, Antogil and Mantitana at Madagascar, factories were established at Surat and Chandernagore, and a fortified post was built at Pondichéry on the Coromandel coast. (28)

This increased interest in the Far Eastern commerce gave rise to a need for ports-of-call on the route to India; a need which was at first met by Mascarin, now better known as Bourbon. (29) But, lacking a natural harbour, that island was much less than ideal for this purpose and it is presumably only because the Dutch were already in possession of Mauritius and the Cape of Good Hope, and the English in control of St. Helena, that the French did not establish a way-station elsewhere. (30)

In December, 1712 Bourbon's Governor, Antoine de Parat, wrote to Pontchartrain, the French Minister of Marine, that Mauritius had been evacuated by the Dutch and that the island should be annexed by France. (31) The loss of Hudson Bay, Acadia, New Foundland and St. Christopher island to England the following year, at the close of the war of Spanish Succession (1700-1713), had made French rulers eager to consolidate their country's influence in Asia. On 31st October, 1714 Pontchartrain directed that Mauritius should be occupied. His orders transmitted to the 'armateurs de Saint-Malo' (32), were sent to the Indian Ocean and led Captain Guillaume Dufresne d'Arset, of the Chasseur, to take possession of the island, which he renamed 'Ile de France', on 21st September, 1715. (33)

Ile de France remained uninhabited for six years. Then the re-organisation of the overseas Chartered Companies in 1719 and their amalgamation in the 'Compagnie Perpétuelle des Indes' gave a strong impetus to French colonial expansion. This 'gigantic consortium' brought together the 'Compagnie d'Occident', the 'Compagnie de Chine' and the 'Compagnie des Indes Orientales'. The brainchild of the financial wizard, John Law, the 'Compagnie Perpétuelle des Indes', funded by the issue of shares (actions des Indes) to the investing public, first undertook the colonisation of Louisiana, but the venture did not succeed according to expectations, and the Law system tumbled into bankruptcy. (34) Despite this the Compagnie undertook the colonisation of Ile de France (35) On the very day that the island was ceded to it by the King, on 2nd April, 1721, it appointed Denis de Nyon, an engineer with fifteen years service in India, as Ile de France's first governor.

The first settlers, 16 men from Mascarin under the leadership of Major Le Toullec du Rongouet , arrived on Christmas eve 1721. Six months earlier de Nyon had sailed from France in command of two ships, the Athalante and the Diane, which had on board :

" une compagnie suisse de 210 hommes avec  
20 femmes et 30 enfants, plusieurs officiers,  
ingénieurs, commis et ouvriers. "

But serious outbreaks of scurvy forced the small squadron to stop at the Atlantic islands for nearly three months to allow the sick to recuperate with the result that the colonists only reached île de France in April, 1722. (36)

An examination of de Nyon's orders and instructions drawn up, and signed in Paris by the Directeur Général of the 'Compagnie des Indes' at the end of May, 1721 shows that it was intended first and foremost that the island should become a way-station for Compagnie ships engaged in Oriental trade. De Nyon's first task was to construct a fort to secure the colony against an external attack. (37) The instructions continued : "Quand il

(le Sieur de Nyon) aura tracé son fort .....  
il marquera autour du fort un endroit le plus  
vaste qu'il pourra et le fera défricher incessamment  
pour y former une habitation considérable qui  
puisse dans la suite fournir des vivres et rafraî-  
chissement nécessaires aux vaisseaux français qui  
y passeront. " (38)

The Governor was to prevent the cutting of ebony trees and of other trees "propre à la construction des vaisseaux et à leur mâture". He was expressly to prohibit the killing of game, or of domestic livestock, to allow their numbers to multiply, and, presumably because tortoise flesh was thought to be efficacious against scurvy, he was also to prevent the colonist : "de tuer aucune tortue de terre, s'il s'en trouve sur l'île, la Compagnie les réservant uniquement pour les rafraîchissements de ses vaisseaux." (39)

Land was to be distributed to settlers who would clear and cultivate it. De Nyon was to ensure " que les habitants travaillent d'abord à se faire des vivres en défrichant les terres, et sèment du froment et du ris." Hence the settlement was to be self-sufficient and it was hoped that a surplus would be grown for the use of the Compagnie. To ensure that the land would be cleared and cultivated, land concessions contained the pro-viso that at the end of three years : " le tout soit en culture telle que la nature du terrain le requerra, à faute de quoi les dites terres reviendront à la Compagnie sans aucune formalité de justice." (40) To provide for the transfer of surplus produce to the administration the concessions also stipulated " qu'il sera payé au garde-magasin de la Compagnie dans l'île, tous les ans et dans le mois de Janvier chaque année par chaque arpent de terre un sol, soit en argent, soit en denrées de pareille valeur, au choix du concessionnaire, et en outre une poule, à peine de 60 sols d'amende contre ceux qui ne paieront pas dans le dit mois de Janvier." (41)

The Compagnie des Indes envisaged that the colony of Ile de France would not only feed itself and supply a surplus of agricultural produce for calling ships, but that it would defray part of the expense of its maintenance by producing valuable export staples. Coffee plants had been brought from Arabia to Bourbon in 1715 and the plantations were reported to be doing well there. It was also believed that pepper could be grown profitably. Hence de Nyon was instructed that after the settlers had sown their fields with provision crops : " il les engagera à en préparer d'autres propres

aux plantations d'épicereries fines... et surtout à celle du café dont il tirera des plants de ceux de Moka, qui croissent actuellement et heureusement dans l'île de Bourbon." (42)

Each year land holders were to pay in kind one-tenth of the production of the "cafés, poivriers, canneliers, drogueries et épicereries fines et autres plantes, arbres et arbustes servant à la teinture et à la médecine, qui pourraient croître sur leurs terres." The remaining output, after payment of the tax, was to be purchased by the Compagnie, for cash or merchandise, at fixed prices (sur le pied du tarif). (43)

The Compagnie des Indes' formal administration of île de France lasted from 1721 to 1764, when the Mascarenes were retroceded to the King. But as the royal officials only arrived in 1767, Compagnie rule continued for a further three years. (44) Throughout this period Compagnie policy was designed to mould the colony into the rôle it had been assigned in de Nyon's instructions : it was to be primarily a haven for French ships participating in Asian commerce. To fulfill this function it was necessary to establish port facilities in the island and to raise a surplus of agricultural produce there, but until 1735 neither of these tasks was undertaken. De Nyon had found it simpler to repair the Dutch ruins of Port Bourbon than to establish a new harbour at Port Nord Ouest, as he had been instructed. (45) The fledgling colony was handicapped most of all by man-power problems, a factor which is examined in some detail in chapter 2, below. Other adverse local circumstances, much the same as those the Dutch had complained about (46), also retarded colonial progress, but this retardation was also linked to the fortunes of the Compagnie des Indes. From its reorganisation in 1723 until 1731, that body was saddled with heavy responsibilities, and was unable to pay much attention, to its eastern possessions. During these years, as Parry put it : " the government persisted in a logical but impracticable marriage of Eastern and Western trade. The Compagnie des Indes was to trade to India and the Far East, to West Africa and the West Indies; it was to operate the ferme de tabacs and the beaver monopoly;

and was to be responsible for the development of Louisiana, including the Illinois territory - this last a heavy military and administrative burden. It got rid of these American responsibilities in 1731. It was still short of capital for its Eastern projects, and incurred large debts in building up its fleet and in constructing dock facilities at Lorient; but by the mid-1730's it was at last able to develop a genuine commercial policy of its own in India, and to become a serious competitor of the English and Dutch. " (47)

At this juncture, the arrival of the energetic and exceptionally able Mahé de Labourdonnais, as governor of the 'Îles de France et de Bourbon', revitalised the Mascarenes and provided the kind of capable leadership required for the continued success of the Compagnie des Indes in Asia. (48)

Born in St. Malo on 11th February, 1699, Labourdonnais displayed unusual ability as a youth. At the age of 18 he sailed in the service of the Compagnie des Indes, reaching the rank of captain in 1724. After the capture of Mahé in 1726 Labourdonnais turned to commerce. Enlisting the aid of Lenoir, Governor of Pondichéry, he purchased several merchant vessels and participated in the lucrative Bengal trade, acquiring a sizeable fortune in the process. From 1729 to 1732 he served as naval captain in Portugal's Estado da India with the title of 'Agent of this Portuguese Majesty on the coast of Coromandel'. Labourdonnais had first visited île de France in 1723. On his return to France in 1733, he gained the support of Contrôleur-Général Orry for a project of amelioration of the Mascarenes and secured the governorship of these island. (49)

Labourdonnais arrived in île de France on 5th June, 1735. - During his administration which lasted until October, 1746, the settlement was transformed from a backwater into a viable colony.

His predecessor, Nicolas de Maupin (1729-1735) had transferred his headquarters from Port Bourbon in the south-east to the 'Camp', the north-west of the island. This decision was taken because of the difficulty of sailing out of the first-mentioned anchorage in the face of prevailing winds. (50) In a letter dated 22nd September, 1731 the Compagnie sanctioned this move, decreeing that it aimed " de fixer

la relâche de ses vaisseaux au seul port du Nord-Ouest interdisant celle du port du Sud-Est à tous les capitaines de ses navires sous quelque prétexte que ce puisse être tant en allant qu'en revenant des Indes"(51) Engineer de Cossigny was sent to the island to fortify the harbour and build the requisite, workshops, warehouses and barracks but he barely spent ten months there, accomplishing nothing. (52) Labourdonnais set to work and within four years had created a little fortified town with quays, stores and a dockyard for the repair and construction of ships. Toussaint says that : "when he left Mauritius his exertions had made it possible for any ship to be built or refitted with as much ease at Port-Louis as in any other port in the East." (53)

Roads were built to the neighbouring districts of Moka and Pamplémousses whence timber and foodstuffs could be carted to the capital. As Leduc put it: "Avant lui, les créoles de l'île de France ne savaient pas ce que c'était qu'une charrette." (54) An aqueduct brought water to the town from Petite Rivière nearby. A start was also made in agriculture, more of both provision and staple crops being grown, as slave labour and finance were made available to the settlers. When Labourdonnais arrived in the island in 1735 the island had 838 inhabitants. Five years later the total population has risen to nearly 3 000, both bond and free (55).

Although Labourdonnais spent the last years of his life in disgrace, there is no denying the magnitude of his achievements in île de France. This was recognised by later historians as well as by persons in his own time. For instance in 1770 Chevalier de Tromelin, an engineer and the author of important improvements to the harbour, wrote "On est redevable à M. de La Bourdonnais de presque tous les travaux utiles qui ont été faits jusqu'à ce jour à l'île de France." (56) In his monumental Histoire Philosophique, Abbé Raynal said : "His schemes bore the mark of genius; nor were his views contracted by the close attention he paid to all the minute details of whatever he undertook. His mind was never alarmed with the appearance of difficulties, and he possessed the rare talent of inspiring the men under his command with the same elevation of spirit." (57)

But Raynal hinted at a less glamorous side of the great man's nature. He added: "His enemies have reproached him with an immoderate passion for riches; and it must be acknowledged he was not scrupulous

in the means of acquiring them " (58) Labourdonnais was above all a mercenary. He turned île de France into his personal fief, acquired extensive land-holdings, imported and sold slaves, and trafficked in Indian merchandise for his own account. (59)

Ile de France's most prestigious governor, whatever his personal shortcomings, was also a visionary. He formulated grandiose plans for the island which he felt was ideally situated to serve as a naval base in war time and as an entrepôt in peace time. On two occasions, in 1736 and in 1740, Labourdonnais wrote to France to gain support for this latter project but was turned down. (60)

The directors admonished their representative for what they considered were extravagant plans. On 10<sup>th</sup> September, 1738 writing that his requisitions of cash and supplies for the island were exorbitant, they remarked "Il paraît . . . . que vous voulez faire de l'île de France un entrepôt". In the same year they complained that he was departing from his appointed tasks : "Nous ne comprenons pas votre manière de penser; vous vous éloignez très fort des vues de la Compagnie, qui ne vous a nommé gouverneur que pour lui faire construire des magasins, faire des logements pour les employés et ouvriers, mettre les îles en état de défense, par de simples batteries, et lui procurer des bestiaux, vivres et légumes en la plus grande quantité qu'il serait possible, pour la relâche de ses vaisseaux, et écarter tout autre vue que vous pourriez avoir." (61)

However, in January, 1742 the Compagnie liberalised Indian commerce, but this concession, which was granted in answer to Labourdonnais' demands against a background of an impending naval conflict with England, was more fictitious than real and of short duration. It was revoked in March, 1746. (62)

When war broke out in 1744 the Compagnie's hopes that île de France would be nothing more than a port-of-call for its ships were dashed. Labourdonnais sailed with a makeshift squadron of armed merchantmen manned by a motley crew of sailors, hardy créoles from the islands, lascars and Malagasy slaves; he defeated Commodore Barnett's English squadron, and captured Madras. The ship building and refitting facilities with which he had endowed the island enabled it to function as a naval base, as he had envisaged. (63)

During the 20 years between the replacement of Labourdonnais as governor-general of the Mascarenes in October 1746 and the outbreak of the Seven Years War, île de France vegetated under an inefficient and corrupt administration. Higher officials and enterprising settlers flouted the Compagnie's commercial monopoly using deserted Port Bourbon to import slaves and contraband merchandise for their private use or resale at lucrative prices. Clearly, interloping was attractive to men who were asked to pay high duties on all imported commodities and who were always complaining that there was a dearth of merchandise on the island. In earlier days the Compagnie itself had not been unwilling to exploit the captive Mauritian market by auctioning scarce supplies to the highest bidder while refusing to follow settlers' demands for sales at fixed prices. Later, when it reverted to the still exploitative, but less unpredictable system of levying import duties, its earlier behaviour was readily imitated by black marketeers of various shades. (64)

A director of the Compagnie des Indes, who had visited île de France in 1739, and who called again in 1754 on his way to Pondichéry, reported that Governor Bouvet's protégé, Pierre Poivre, and a member of the island's Conseil Supérieur, Sieur Mabile, were proposing to smuggle Malay slaves into the island for a large plantation which they wanted to establish near Port-Bourbon. Bouvet has fitted a vessel for Poivre to sail to the Moluccas in search of rare spice plants, but according to rumours: " le Sieur Le Poivre est lié d'intérêt avec le Sieur Mabile et doit rapporter de Timor beaucoup d'esclaves, qu'il mettra en passant au Port du Sud-Est, où le Sr Mabile a trouvé le secret de persuader à M. Bouvet, je ne sais sur quel-prétexte, que sa présence est nécessaire et où effectivement ce Conseiller est résident. " (65)

Pierre Poivre did bring back spice trees from Timor whence he returned to île de France on 8<sup>th</sup> June 1755. It is not known whether he had slaves on board as well, but his 160 tons Colomba, if fully laden, could have carried more than 200 slaves. On hearing the rumours that preceded Poivre's departure Godeheu had noted that : "Au reste, cette introduction furtive de noirs ne serait pas extraordinaire on assure qu'il s'en fait assez souvent dans l'île. Les habitants ne le dissimulent pas, en même temps qu'ils se plaignent de ce que la Compagnie n'en produit point." (66)

Godeheu added that smuggling was not confined to slaves alone: " la pacotille s'introduit, ainsi que les noirs de traite, plus ouvertement que jamais, et j'ai connaissance d'une partie de 160 barriques de vin qui a été débarqué pendant mon séjour." (67)

David (1746-1753), Labourdonnais' successor, had built a new governor's residence at Réduit, in the Moka district, near his sugar plantation of Minissy, at the stated cost of 80 thousand livres. Godeheu suspected however that this amount did not include the full cost of labour. Godeheu's account suggests that he disapproved of this large expenditure which met no real need. The Réduit apart, he added:

"je ne trouve ici aucun bâtiment nouveau pour la Compagnie, que ceux que j'avais vu en 1739, si j'en excepte une maison à M. Mabile, une autre à M. Ducray, le commencement d'une paroisse et quelques logements de domestiques ajoutés au Gouvernement." (68)

Godeheu found the port captain incompetent and the harbour workshops highly disorganised. At the end of Compagnie rule, a decade later, the port was clogged with sand, mud and sunken wrecks and unsafe to shipping. (69)

Agriculture also stagnated during these years. A handful of people with access to land, capital and man-power, and with influence on the administration, held an effective monopoly of the local market for rural produce. There was usually a market for provision crops, which smaller planters could resort to, but in the absence of suitable extra-colonial outlets, the above situation seriously restricted the development of staple agriculture.

It should be noted however that although economic progress under Compagnie administration was unspectacular, the size of the settlement did increase from just below 3 000 in 1740 to nearly 19 000 inhabitants by 1767. (70)

After Godeheu left île de France, he called at Bourbon, then sailed to India where he replaced Dupleix as Governor-General of the French establishments beyond the Cape of Good Hope. The Compagnie des Indes was unable to bear the financial burden of Dupleix's policy of expanding French influence in India through alliances and intrigues with Indian princes. War had raged intermittently in Carnatic and the Decan since 1748 as a result of it, and while the policy had at first been successful, it became subject to decreasing returns as the English company became more skilful at the same tactics under the able guidance of Clive "a condottiere as bold and resolute" as Dupleix himself. (71)

When formal war was declared in India in 1757 a French squadron under d'Aché tried to repeat Labourdonnais' success of two decades earlier but he was outmatched by the opposition. Ile de France once again became a naval base, a function it could not adequately perform. Deprived of sea power, besieged by land and cut off by a British blockade of the Coromandel Coast the French posts succumbed one by one between 1759 and 1761. At the end of the war in 1763 the Compagnie des Indes Orientales was ruined. (72)

At the end of the war the Mascarenes were returned to the king for the sum of 12½ million livres. (73)

The Seven Years War and its aftermath were something of a mixed blessing for that island. On the one hand, the war and the mismanagement of Compagnie officials during the inter-regnum (1764-1767) exhausted the colony. The shortage of food-stuffs and other supplies during wartime led to an orgy of profiteering and to massive inflation as a large volume of paper money was printed to meet the increased costs of running the settlement during wartime. (74)

On the other hand, the new royal administration operated within a rather less restrictive framework than its predecessor. This was especially the case in the field of economic policy. During the eighteenth century the

system of 'compagnie privilégiées' was criticised by thinkers who held quite disparate views as to which system should replace it. Montesquieu for instance opposed the chartered companies on the grounds that they wielded too much power. In the Esprit des Lois he wrote : " La nature des grandes compagnies ... est de donner aux richesses particulières la force des richesses publiques, cette force ne peut se trouver que dans les mains du Prince." (75) Montesquieu believed that colonial trade should not be placed in the hands of private monopolies but should be subjected to metropolitan control. What he was advocating was not free trade but the 'régime de l'exclusif'. (76)

The great trading companies also drew the criticism of the Physiocrats. Thus in 1755 Vincent de Gournay, who is said to have coined the phrase 'laissez-faire, laissez-passer', called for the abrogation of the privileges of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales and for the opening of Indian commerce to all. Gournay presumably became disenchanted with the cumbrous and ineffective French mercantilist system as a result of his experience, first, as a businessman and, later, as intendant of commerce. (77) The father of French Physiocracy, François de Quesnay, by contrast, had no first-hand experience of mercantilism but he shared Gournay's opposition to it on theoretical grounds. Quesnay believed that agriculture was the only productive activity. National wealth could not be increased through trade as this latter activity consisted merely in exchanging commodities of equal value. Despite its unproductive nature, trade was nevertheless necessary to the workings of the economic system, which Quesnay depicted in the Tableau Economique, which was first published in 1758. A physician by training and by profession, Quesnay drew an analogy between the movement of money and goods in the economy and the circulation of the blood in the body. He argued that greatest economic well-being would be secured only when the flow of resources in the body economic was unhampered. This meant, inter alia, that speculation by middlemen should be replaced by direct trade between primary producers and the final users of the former's products, and, that trade regulations should be done away with. Such regulations were in any case quite superfluous, Quesnay maintained, as they were incompatible with the natural order. As this order was 'evidently the most advantageous to mankind', it could be expected that men, without being compelled to do so and pursuing their own private interests, would behave in such a way as to bring it about. (78)

Physiocratic doctrine was very much en vogue in the 1760's and 1770's but, as Joseph Schumpeter pointed out, it had little impact on public policy: "Quesnay's success was primarily a succès de salon. Polite society talked physiocracy for a time but very few people outside took much notice of it except by way of sneering at it. There was thus a physiocrat fashion but there was no physiocrat movement in the sense in which there was (and is) a Marxist movement." (79)

The Duc de Choiseul, Minister of Marine and Colonies from 1761 to 1770, stood much closer to Montesquieu than to the Physiocrats in his approach to colonial trade. He devoted the seven years of peace during which he was in office, to strengthening France's remaining colonial possessions in preparation for an anticipated war with England. He blamed the 'compagnies privilégiées' for the losses of the recent conflict and decided to suppress them in order to have a free hand in colonial reorganisation. Accordingly in August, 1769 the charter of the Compagnie des Indes Orientales was revoked, all its rights passing to the Crown, while the Mascarenes were opened to all French commerce. The commercial system which Choiseul imposed on the Mascarenes can by no stretch of the imagination be described as liberal, but in the context of the times and by comparison with what had prevailed before, it was an immense improvement. (80)

After Tromelin's harbour improvements in the 1770's had endowed île de France once again with a safe natural harbour, the island became a regular port-of-call for metropolitan commercial traffic, both that sailing to, and that from India, but especially the latter. (81) At the same time it became an important centre of the 'country trade', the 'commerce d'Inde en Inde', which linked the island with the Bay of Bengal, the West African coast, Arabia, Indonesia and the Cape. It was also the core of the Malagasy trade in slaves, bullocks and rice. (82)

Toussaint says that this maritime activity led to the establishment of a mercantile community at île de France: "There is evidence that at an early date a class of armateurs . . . . came into being and soon acquired such weight as to become the 'ruling class' in the island, the planters coming only second." (83)

In another work, Toussaint states that during the period 1773 to 1783, 764 ships, of which 538 were engaged in the country trade and 226 in long-distance trading, called at île de France. This was a far cry from the average of 18 ships a year recorded during the period 1727 to 1735. (84)

In 1785, the charter of the Compagnie des Indes was revived. The Mascarenes however were specifically excluded from its area of jurisdiction and remained a centre visited by private traders, now excluded once more from India. (85)

In 1771 the 'exclusif' had been breached in the French Caribbean when foreigners were given permission to trade with St. Lucia and Môle Saint Nicholas in Saint Domingue in selected commodities. In 1784 the number of free ports in the Antilles was extended to eight. (86) The following year, as a result of moves to re-establish the Compagnie des Indes, the American ambassador to France, Morris, called for the creation of a free port at île de France. Two years later, on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1787, Port-Louis was opened to foreign trade. American ships had been admitted even earlier, in 1786. (87)

From 1784 to 1792, 1 442 ships or nearly twice as many as in the preceding decade, called at Port-Louis. Of these 965 were engaged in country-shipping and 477 in long-distance trading. Whereas in the earlier period only 47 of all long-distance trading ships were of foreign origin, there were 86 such vessels in the later and shorter period. (88)

It has been argued that the development of île de France as a trading-centre after 1769 was at the expense of agriculture. For various reasons, however, to be examined in Chapter 1, it appears that exactly the opposite was the case. The period of free trade coincided with the rise of large-scale staple cultivation. This rise occurred because of, rather than in spite of, the progress of trade. (89)

Thus by 1790 île de France had become an important maritime as well as agricultural centre. Moreover because the Treaty of Paris of 1763 had prohibited the fortification and garrisoning of French trading posts in India, France had turned her Mascarene colony into an important naval base from where well armed privateers could prey on enemy shipping in wartime. (90)

2. Subject of Thesis.

At the end of the ancien régime, île de France was in the process of becoming a slave-colony of the Caribbean type. Sugar was not dominant on the rural landscape, but slaves formed the bulk of the population and made up the greater share of the labour force. In 1788 slaves constituted 85% of the total population of the island. Slavery remained of utmost importance to the insular economy until its abolition in 1833. Even as late as 1826, slaves still constituted 75% of the total population and whilst this represented a slight decrease in their relative importance, absolute slave numbers had risen from below 38 000 to just above 69 000 from 1788 to 1826. (91)

From the time that slavery ended in 1834, Mauritian sugar planters turned to India for supplies of bond labour. The former slaves worked side by side with Indian indentured labourers in the sugar cane fields until the ending of the period of apprenticeship in 1839. After that time however, the former were entirely replaced by the latter in plantation agriculture.

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the relationship between sugar and coerced labour in terms of planter attitudes and of the imperatives of sugar production.

In their book Time on the Cross, Fogel and Engerman draw a direct link between sugar and slavery. They state that in the New World the sugar industry was the major user of slave labour;

"It was Europe's sweet tooth rather than its adiction to tobacco or its infatuation with cotton cloth, that determined the extent of the Atlantic slave trade. Sugar was the greatest of the slave crops. Between 60 and 70 per cent of all the Africans who survived the Atlantic voyages ended up in one or other of Europe's sugar colonies." (92)

In Mauritius the heyday of the slave trade preceded the rise of sugar as the island's chief export. By 1790 the economy was reasonably diversified. This was also true of the agricultural sector within which

activities were directed at provision crops and at a variety of export staples, of which sugar was only one.

In the decade of the 1790's however the Mauritian economy took some faltering steps in the direction of monoculture. By the end of the Peace of Amiens, sugar had become the colony's most important export staple.

In Chapter 1 the factors that held back the development of staple agriculture in the 18<sup>th</sup> century are examined and a tentative explanation of the sugar boom of the 1790's is given.

In Chapter 2 the establishment of slavery in the Mascarenes is examined. The growth of the slave population during the period of French rule is analysed, and the composition of the slave population and the implications of this for slave demographic performance are studied. Finally, the geographical sources of origin of the slave population are given and some observations are made on the process of 'créolisation', on slave stereotypes and on the link between ethnicity and slave occupation.

The 1790's are of crucial significance for Mauritian history, not only because of the rise of sugar as the major export crop, but also because of developments in the political field. During that decade the colonists took control of internal administration. In 1796 the metropolitan government attempted to re-establish its authority in the colony and to enforce the decree of 16 pluviôse abolishing slavery. However these attempts failed, the commissaries sent by the Directoire were expelled and the island became quasi-independent, even though it still pledged formal allegiance to France.

These events, and their impact on planter attitudes to slavery and on the Mauritian slave system, are examined in Chapter 3,

In Chapter 4 the rise of the sugar industry from the time of the British conquest in 1810 to the abolition of slavery in 1833 is analysed. Some of the factors responsible for the spectacular expansion of the sugar industry in those years are looked at. In particular the debate, then current, as to whether illicit slave importations or technological progress in sugar cultivation was responsible for this expansion, is reviewed. Some implications of slavery for sugar technology are also drawn.

During this period the Mauritian slave system was challenged from abroad. These challenges came in three distinct but overlapping waves. These were the threats represented by the abolition of the slave trade in 1814 (in Mauritius), by amelioration policy from 1823, and by the campaign for total emancipation (1830-1833). During those years the planters had no political power in any formal sense. The Colonial Assembly of the 1790's was long defunct; the island being ruled by a governor assisted by a nominated council after 1825. In Chapter 5 & 6 the question of by what means and to what extent the planters were able to resist these external threats, despite their lack of formal political representation is studied.

In 1833 slavery was abolished in the British colonies. The economic implications of slave emancipation are examined in Chapter 6. In particular, a tentative explanation of the shift, from the ex-slaves to indentured Indian labourers in plantation agriculture, is given.

The findings are summarized in the Conclusion and some implications are then drawn.

In a review article published in the early 1960's, Henry Brunschwig complained that despite the importance of slavery in the past of the Mascarenes, the slave is missing from the historiography of the region. He writes : " Les érudits locaux continuent de publier d'excellents travaux sur le passé de leur patrie." But he states that these works are marked : "par un certain caractère de classe ... Le nègre, sa condition, son commerce, est presque absent des travaux que nous avons reçus." (93)

Indeed a brief look at the recent historiography of the region shows that Brunschwig's criticism is still valid today. The only notable exception is Filliot's excellent thesis, 'La Traite des Esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle', which was published by ORSTOM in 1974. But Filliot's thesis, as its title indicates, focuses mainly on the slave trade. A chapter on 'Le Cadre Economique' relates the size of slave importations to changes in the insular economies. However, it is somewhat brief and does not examine the forces hindering the development of staple agriculture in the islands during the 18<sup>th</sup> century at any great depth.

Moreover his account stops at 1810 or before the phase of substantial expansion of the sugar industry.

Perhaps the most comprehensive published treatment of the development of that industry is by Roland Lamusse. (94) Lamusse divides his thesis into 4 parts, the second of which examines the role of labour in the economic development of the sugar-industry. But Lamusse examines this subject over a long time-period and deals with slavery rather cursorily. Only 2 of part two's fourteen pages are devoted to it. The links between sugar and slavery are not specified. The shift from slavery to Indian labour is seen simply as a rational response to a labour shortage caused by emancipation, as something quite inevitable. The relationship between a coerced or 'captive' labour force and the type of technology used is not examined.

This thesis aims at partly filling this gap existing in Mauritian historiography. It should be seen at least as a first step in this direction.

As no published material exists on the subject treated here, the thesis is limited in the first place by its pioneering nature.

A pioneering effort calls for a heavy reliance on primary materials. The South African Public Library in Cape Town was found to hold a surprisingly large volume of primary works but its collection was not comprehensive. During a short trip to Mauritius, at his own expense in April, 1976, the writer was able to obtain some essential data, not available in local libraries. The three week stay was too short however to yield the hoped for crop of primary material. The Archives were being rehoused, the cost of xeroxing documents prohibitive and photocopies were not immediately available on demand, nor were unpublished theses readily available for consultation according to an archaic Mauritian Archives ruling. In view of these difficulties and of the short time available, most of the research in Mauritius was undertaken at the Carnegie library, in Curepipe.

Although a wide range of primary sources has been consulted, the lack of a comprehensive set of material has forced the writer to rely exclusively on secondary works of varying quality for certain parts of his thesis.

Another limitation is the dearth of continuous statistics which on many occasions necessitated reliance on qualitative evidence.

Despite these limitations, it is felt that the main conclusions of the thesis are substantiated by the available evidence and that further research would not materially change the broad outlines of the arguments.

Notes to Introduction.

- (1) Ramdin, T. Mauritius : A Geographical Survey University Tutorial Press Ltd, London, 1973. (2<sup>nd</sup> edition) p. 1  
Filliot, J.M. La Traite des Esclaves vers les Mascareignes au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle ORSTOM, Paris, 1974. pp 12 - 13 Map 1 is based on Filliot's Carte de l'océan Indien; Ibid, between pp 12 - 13.
- (2) Visdelou-Guimbeau, G. de, 'La découverte des Iles Mascareignes', Mauritius 1948; reprinted in La Revue Rétrospective de l'île Maurice (hereafter Rev. Ret. Maur.) vol vi, 4 (Juillet, 1955) pp 128-134  
Filliot, J.M. - Op. cit., p 15 n..2.  
North-Coombes, A. The Island of Rodrigues, The Standard Printing Estb. Port Louis 1971, pp 15 -16.
- (3) Ibid.  
Heseltine, N. Madagascar, Praeger Publishers, London, 1971 pp 1 - 2.
- (4) Filliot, J.M. - Op. cit., p. 15. n.2.  
Visdelou-Guimbeau, G. de - Op. cit., p.131.
- (5) North-Coombes, A. - Op.cit., pp 17 - 19.
- (6) Parry, J.H. The Age of Reconnaissance ; Discovery, Exploration and settlement 1450-1650, Cardinal, London, 1963, p.182
- (7) Ibid., p. 249  
The Mascarenes lying outside the Dutch route to the Indies were not considered as suitable ports-of-call. For this purpose the Dutch used St. Helena on the return journey and the Cape on the outward-run until the permanent occupation of the Cape in 1652.  
Wilson, M. & Thompson, L. (eds) The Oxford History of South Africa Oxford University Press, London, 1969. vol 1. pp. 187-188.
- (8) North-Coombes, A. - Op.cit., p. 22.  
Sornay, P. de, Isle de France : Ile Maurice - Sa géographie, Son Histoire, Son Agriculture, Ses Industries, Ses Institutions, The General Printing & Stationery Cy. Ltd, 1950. p.29
- (9) cf. Walker, E.A. A History of Southern Africa, Longmans, London, 1968, pp. 26-29.  
Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit., p. 18.
- (10) Ibid. p. 17.  
Robequain, C. 'Destin d'une île à sucre : L'économie et le peuplement de Maurice'. Annales de Géographie vol. LXIII, 338 (1954), p. 259

Robequain says that the fruit-bat was probably the only mammal on Mauritius before its discovery but that : "Comme dans tant de petites îles la colonisation entraîna le pullulement d'espèces délibérément ou fortuitement introduites". For example when Admiral Cornelius Matelief de Jonge visited the island in January 1606 he set loose 24 rams and ewes and a dozen pigs and sows. The Dutch introduced the mongoose from India, the monkey (*Cercopithecus Sabeous*) from Ceylon and the stag (*Cerfus Elafus*) from Java.  
Ibid.

Toussaint, A. Port-Louis ; Deux Siècles d'Histoire (1735-1935), La Typographie Moderne, Port Louis, 1936. p. 3.

(11) Filliot, J.M. - Op. cit. , p. 18.

Toussaint, A. - Op. cit. , p. 3.

(12) Ramdin, T. -Op. cit. , pp. 3,5,7,18.

Robequain, C. - Op. cit. ,pp. 253-254.

Sornay, P. de - Op. cit. , p. 1.

cf. Ch. 4, note 16

(13) Ramdin, T. -Op. cit. , pp. 19-22,

Robequain, C. - Op. cit. , pp. 261-262. Most travellers to Mauritius, not only during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries, but even today, are amazed by the large heaps of stones and boulders that are found in cane-fields in some parts of the island. In those areas the soil is shallow, or only moderately deep, but can still bear good crops as sheet erosion is limited by the soil's great permeability. Cf. Ch. 4 n. 96 on the influence of this situation on agricultural practices.

(14) Ramdin, T. -Op. cit. , pp. 5, 7.

Sornay, P. de - Op. cit. , pp 9 -12.

Robequain, C. - Op. cit. , pp. 257-258.

Until the British built a serviceable trans-island road in the 1820's most of the communications with Port-Louis, the main town and port, was by sea. For many years after the road was built bulky produce was still shipped in coastal vessels to the port. cf. Ch. 4.

(15) Sornay , P. de - Op. cit. , pp. 22, 24 .

Ramdin, T. - Op. cit, p. 11.

(16) Ibid. pp. 10,11.

Robequain, C. pp. 258-259.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century deforestation did not cause much erosion, given the large expanse of level land and the ground's porousness, except where

population pressure on land led to the cultivation of mountain slopes. This was particularly the case in Port-Louis in the late 1760's as observed Abbé Rochon, who wrote that the mountains encircling the port: "have been cultivated to the very tops. The chalk of the mountains is become dry, and the earth proper for vegetation has fallen down into the valleys. Those large trees, which, when the island was inhabited, secured the earth from such dangerous falls, have been either burnt or cut down. Torrents have been consequently formed and the greater part of the gravel washed down by them has choked the harbour." cf. Rochon, Abbé A Voyage to Madagascar and the East Indies. Translated from the French, illustrated with an accurate map of the island of Madagascar to which is added a memoir on the Chinese trade (by Brunel), G.G.J. Robinson, London 1792, pp xxvi - xxvii.

- (17) After Ramdin's Map, 'Relief and Rainfall', p. 6; and, Mauritius (Physical Map) of W. & A.K. Johnston & G.W. Bacon Ltd, Edinburgh and London (Natural scale 1: 350 000)
- (18) Ramdin, T -Op.cit., pp. 14 -17  
Robequain, C. -Op.cit., p. 259.
- (19) Kuczynski, R.R. Demographic Survey of the British Colonial Empire, vol. II, Oxford University Press, London, 1949. pp. 743-746.
- (20) cf. for instance : Barnwell, P.J. & Toussaint, A. A Short History of Mauritius, Longmans Green & Co. Ltd, London, 1949, pp.3 et se .  
Sornay, P. de - Op.cit., pp. 30- 31; and Hazareesingh, K. History of Indians in Mauritius, Macmillan Education Limited, Hong Kong, 1975 p. 2.  
Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit., p.20.
- (21) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., p. 744. The permanent population was sometimes swollen to double its original size or more whenever Dutch ships called or when cargoes of slaves destined for Batavia were landed from Madagascar cf. Barnwell, P.J. & Toussaint, A - Op.cit., p.13  
Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit., p.18
- (22) Ibid.  
Barnwell, P.J. & Toussaint, A - Op.cit., p.13.
- (23) Ibid p. 15  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., p. 744

- (24) Wilson, M. & Thompson L. - Op.cit. , p. 188.
- (25) Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit. , p. 19.
- (26) Ibid, p. 20.
- (27) Kuczynski says that an unknown number of runaway slaves, as well as 4 whites and 2 Malays, who pretended to be sick and absolutely refused to embark, were left behind by the Dutch in 1710. When the French arrived in 1721 they did not report having encountered anyone, although legend has it that they met a German recluse, Wilhem Lechenig, living in the interior.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. p. 746.  
Lagesse, M. L'île de France avant la Bourdonnais (1721-1735)  
Imprimerie Commercial, Port Louis, 1972, p. 10
- (28) Deschamps, H. Histoire de Madagascar, Editions Berger-Lennault, Paris, 1965, (3<sup>ème</sup> édition) pp. 67-74.  
Hermann, P. Histoire et Géographie de l'île de la Réunion, Librairie C. Delagrave, Paris, c. 1908, pp. 31-32.  
Leroy-Beaulieu, P. De la Colonisation Chez les Peuples Modernes, Librairies Félix Alcan et Guillaumin Réunies, Paris, 1908 (6<sup>ème</sup> édition) tome 1, pp. 143-145.  
Toussaint, A. History of the Indian Ocean Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1961 pp. 125 - 126.
- (29) The island was renamed Bourbon in 1649 when captain Le Bourg took possession of the island for France for the third time. The island had been claimed by Gaubert in 1638, and by Pronis in 1642  
Hermann, P. - Op.cit. , pp. 31-32.
- (30) Napal, D. Les Indiens à l'île de France, Editions Nationales, Port Louis, 1965, pp. 4 - 5.  
Parry, J.H. Trade and Dominion : The European Overseas Empires in the Eighteenth Century, Cardinal, London, 1971 p 99.
- (31) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , p. 746
- (32) Hardy, G. Histoire de la Colonisation Française, Librairie Larose, Paris, 1943, (4<sup>ème</sup> édition), p. 83.  
Barnwell, P.J. & Toussaint, A. - Op.cit. , p. 42.  
In 1712, and again in 1714, the Compagnie des Indes, which had been reconstituted in 1685, ceded its privileges to the Société Croyat of Saint-Malo. The 'Malouins' controlled French East-Indian commerce until May 1719. Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit, p. 38.

- (33) Sornay, P. de - Op.cit, p. 30.  
Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit. , p. 38.
- (34) Hardy, G. - Op.cit. , pp. 76-79.  
Parry, J.H. Trade and Dominion . . . . - Op.cit. , p. 118.
- (35) The occupation of île de France was begun several months before the collapse of the Compagnie des Indes and its reorganisation in 1723. While the financial position of that body was by no means sound in mid-1721, this aspect was overruled by two other considerations. The first was the need for an adequate port-of-call on the route to India, the second was the fear that île de France would be seized by a foreign power. cf. note 37, below.
- (36) Lagesse, M. - Op.cit. , pp. 9 - 14.
- (37) 'Ordres et Instructions pour le Sieur de Nyon, Gouverneur de l'île de France, 31 may 1721' Rev. Ret. Maur. vol. iv, 1 (Jan. 1953) pp 7 -16.  
The Compagnie feared that the Dutch, ' les Ostendois' or other European nations might have taken île de France before de Nyon's arrival. The latter was ordered to send Lafeuillé, captain of the Diane to a reconnaissance of the island while the rest of the expedition waited at Bourbon. If île de France was found already occupied Lafeuillé was to be enjoined "de ne commettre aucun acte d'hostilité et de s'en revenir à l' Ile de Bourbon pour affermir cette dernière colonie, avec les troupes embarquées sur l'Athalante et sur la Diane" (Ibid, pp. 7,12) As an alternative to île de France the Compagnie suggested that De Nyon could proceed to the island of Jean de Lisboa "dans laquelle on assure y avoir un excellent port, et l'île très bien boisée, remplie de bestiaux et sans aucun habitant ni naturel du pays." (Ibid, p.13) Fortunately, île de France was found uninhabited and was occupied, since Jean de Lisboa turned out to be an imaginary island.
- (38) 'Ordres et instructions pour le Sieur de Nyon. . . " -Op.cit, p. 8.
- (39) Ibid. pp 9,12.
- (40) Ibid pp. 12,19.
- (41) Ibid p.11.
- (42) Ibid p. 9.  
Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit, p. 55.

- (43) 'Ordres et instructions pour le Sieur de Nyon . . . . . ' Op.cit. , p. 11.  
The holders of concessions were exempted from the payment of taxes for three years from the day of obtaining their concessions. cf. Chapter 1 on early coffee growing in Mauritius.
- (44) Napal, D. Les Constitutions de l'île Maurice, The Mauritius Printing Cy. Ltd. , Port-Louis, 1962, pp. 1 - 2 .
- (45) Lagesse, M. - Op.cit. , pp. 18 - 19.
- (46) Ibid, pp. 7 - 55. Crops were ravaged by cyclones and destroyed by rats, runaway slaves were a major threat to the settlers in isolated areas and the inhabitants preferred to hunt than to cultivate the land. In Sept. 1724 the C.I.O. decided to reduce the garrison in the island by half and ordered a halt to fortification works 'jusqu'à ce qu'on fut assuré du parti que l'on pourrait tirer de cette isle'' This indecision continued to characterise C.I.O. policy towards île de France throughout the first decade of settlement.
- (47) Parry, J.H. Trade and Dominion . . . . . - Op.cit. , p.90.
- (48) Ibid, p. 213.
- (49) Alpers, E.A. 'The French Slave Trade in East Africa (1721-1810)' Cahiers d'Etudes Africaines vol. 10, 1 (1970) pp. 88-89.  
Crépin, P 'Les îles de France et de Bourbon' in Hanoteaux G. & Martineau, A. (eds) Histoire des Colonies Françaises et de l'Expansion de la France dans le Monde, Librairie Plon, Paris, 1933, Tome vi , p. 333.  
Freeman-Grenville, G.S.P. The French at Kilwa Island : An Episode in 18<sup>th</sup> Century East African History, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1965 p. 9.  
Le Duc, Saint-Elme Ile de France : Documents pour servir à son Histoire Civile et Militaire. Paris. 1844. p.37  
Barnwell, P.J. & Toussaint, A. - Op.cit, p. 50.
- (50) Lagesse, M. - Op.cit. , pp. 40-41.
- (51) Ibid p. 41 This ruling may have saved the duplication of port services, but it was to provide a loophole for smuggling via the deserted Port Sud-Est.
- (52) Ibid pp 41, 51-53.
- (53) Toussaint, A. Harvest of the Sea : The Mauritian Sea Story in Outline The Mauritius Printing Cy, Port-Louis, 1966, p. 2.

- (54) Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit., p. 39.
- (55) Ibid, pp. 37 - 38.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., p. 755.  
cf. Chap 1 below.  
Lagesse, M. suggests that the population in 1735 may well have been higher than this, as a census taken in March of that year gave a total of 1 922 inhabitants for the island. Op. cit p.55
- (56) Comité du Bi-Centenaire, Mahé de Labourdonnais ; Documents réunis par le Comité du Bi-Centenaire de Labourdonnais, 11 février 1899, avec des annotations par le Comité des Souvenirs Historiques, E. Pezzani, Port-Louis, 1899, p. 21 , note1.
- (57) Raynal Abbé A Philosophical and Political History of the Settlement and Trade of the Europeans in the East and West Indies, revised, augmented and published in ten volumes by the Abbé Raynal. Newly translated from the French by J.O. Justamond F.R.S. in six volumes second edition; A. Strahan, T. Cadell & W. Davies, London, 1798 p. 94.
- (58) Ibid.
- (59) Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit, pp. 40-41.
- (60) Toussaint, A. Harvest of the Sea . . . . - Op.cit, p. 17.  
Ly Tio Fane, Mlle M. 'Premier Projets d'Entrepôt à l'Île de France 1766-1780' Communications du Congrès d'Histoire Maritime de Beyrouth, 1966. pp. 487-488.
- (61) Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit., p. 43.
- (62) Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit., p. 40.  
Barnwell P.J., Toussaint A, - Op.cit., pp. 51-52.
- (63) Parry J.H. Trade and Dominion . . . . . - Op.cit., pp. 213- 214.  
Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit. pp. 39, 47.  
Napal, D Les Indiens à l'Île de France - Op.cit.,pp. 36 - 39, says that Labourdonnais made extensive use of 'Iascars' from Pondichéry and Surate as sailors as white seamen were not plentiful.  
cf. p. 17 above.
- (64) Lagesse, M. - Op.cit. p. 39.  
Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit, p. 40.  
Barnwell P.J. & Toussaint, A - Op.cit. pp. 70-71.  
cf. evidence of Godeheu, below.
- (65) Godeheu, Extraits du Journal de Godeheu, Rev. Ret. Maur., vol iv 4 (Juillet 1953) p. 216.

- (66) Ibid.  
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The ratio of slaves to tonnage was calculated by Filliot, J.M. -  
Op.cit. , p. 223 after A. Toussaint La Route des îles p. 449. The  
Compagnie was not opposed to the introduction of slaves as such but  
to the evasion of entrance duty on imported slaves cf. Chapter 2.
- (67) Godeheu - Op.cit. , p. 217.
- (68) Comité du Bi-Centenaire - Op.cit, p. 18,n.  
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- (69) Ibid, pp. 148-149.  
cf. note 16; above.
- (70) cf. Chapter 1.  
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Ile de France's population in 1767 may have been inflated by the  
arrival, from the French trading posts in India, of military and  
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## CHAPTER 1

### Plantation Agriculture at Ile de France during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

The term plantation initially meant "a plot of ground set with plants", but in the early stages of British colonisation in the Caribbean, and in North America, it was used to refer to "a group of settlers or even the political unit constructed by such a group". However, as overseas settlements became known as colonies, the word plantation acquired a new meaning. In the Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences the term is defined as denoting : "large scale agricultural units in the warmer climates. It is commonly applied moreover only to a property producing a single crop or possibly two crops grown primarily for export". (1)

Normally located in tropical areas, and supplying markets situated in the temperate areas, plantations represent : "an invasion of the tropics prompted by the growing desire of non-tropical peoples for the objects which only the warmer lands can furnish." (2)

Plantation agriculture emerged in the Mascarenes during the second decade of the eighteenth century when coffee, introduced from Arabia in 1715, was grown on a large-scale for the metropolitan market. Coffee cultivation succeeded beyond expectations in Bourbon. The first sizeable cargo, weighing nearly 24 000 'livres' was landed at Lorient in 1727. Thereafter coffee exports from Bourbon rose from 120 000 'livres' in 1728 to nearly 900 000 'livres' in 1734. (3) Initially the Compagnie des Indes clearly intended to extend coffee cultivation to île de France. Its instructions to De Nyon specified that the growing of coffee was to be especially encouraged in the island. The Compagnie was the only outlet for insular produce ; and the only source of imported supplies, and, it could, if it so wished, foster the development of coffee cultivation by manipulating product and factor markets. However, while in some respects Compagnie policy was favourable to plantation agriculture, in other respects it was clearly detrimental to it.

This can be seen from De Nyon's instructions. On the one hand, the settlers were to be granted land concessions on easy terms, and were to receive a three year exemption from the annual payment of rent, and from a tithe which was to be levied on produce taken for sale to the Compagnie warehouse. Slaves, seeds, rations and agricultural implements were to be sold to the settlers on credit, and they were to be allowed three years before repayment became due. (4)

On the other hand, it seems that the Compagnie was unwilling to forego the high profits which it could earn by virtue of its monopoly position. For instance, the instructions stipulated that agrarian implements were to be sold "sur le pied de cent pour cent du prix de la facture." (5) Slaves were to be sold "sur le pied de 150 à 200 livres par chaque pièce d'Inde." This was five to seven times greater than the purchase price of slaves in Madagascar, the main source of supply. After the deduction of trading costs, the available evidence suggests, that such selling prices would guarantee a net profit rate of 200% or more. (6)

These predatory tendencies of the Compagnie would have handicapped the development of plantation agriculture in île de France at the best of times. However in the 1720's, when the colony was still in its infancy, a host of other factors militated against agricultural progress. Like the Dutch during the previous century, the first French colonists were threatened by the raids of maroons. Their crops were subjected to the depredations of rodents and locusts and to the intermittent ravages of violent cyclones and protracted droughts. They eked a meagre existence from an apparently inclement land and could devote little attention to the raising of tropical staples, or even to the production of a surplus of provisions for calling ships. Instead the island was always in a state of want and had to be supplied from abroad with foodstuffs. When the harvest failed and aid was not readily forthcoming from abroad, the colonists frequently abandoned their farms to seek sustenance in the forests. (7) On 17<sup>th</sup> March, 1731, after the crops had been destroyed by a violent cyclone, Merville de Saint Rémy wrote to the Minister of Marine : "Il y a presque quarante jours que officiers, soldats, habitants, ouvriers et noirs de la Compagnie sont à vivre dans les bois." (8)

During 1734 there were six consecutive cyclones, followed by a drought. Early in the following year Governor Maupin wrote to his

superiors that he had been forced to buy rice from a Swedish ship in contravention of regulations. He added : "Ce secours avec le peu qui nous restait et notre économie, nous a prolongé la vie jusqu'au 14 février jour où tout nous a manqué et où je fus dans la dure nécessité de voir aller une partie des habitants dans les bois et d'y envoyer moi-même tous les soldats, ouvriers, matelots, indiens et noirs esclaves qui sont ici, excepté 20 soldats et un très petit nombre de chacun des autres pour le service le plus indispensable." (9)

Another drawback to colonial progress was the small size and military nature of the settlement. Although the island was quite small, population density was very low. A favourable balance between population and natural resources made it more attractive to seek one's keep by hunting and fishing, than by back-breaking agricultural work under the tropical sun. To force the colonists to till the land, Pierre Christophe Lenoir, commandant general of the French establishments in India, placed a ban on hunting and had all but twenty of the dogs on the island destroyed in 1726. (10) Until the time of Labourdonnais' administration, soldiers made up the bulk of the population. They made unwilling labourers and threatened desertion if they were compelled to work. Moreover the agreement drawn up between the Compagnie des Indes and the Compagnie suisse du Sieur Bugnot, which supplied the troops to garrison the island, stipulated that only "le tiers de la Compagnie suisse sera tenu de faire le service, soit pour monter la garde, soit pour travailler de son métier." (11) The Compagnie des Indes tried to turn some soldiers into farmers by inducing them to marry. In a letter dated 31 December, 1727 it stated: "Elle (la Compagnie) fait aussy passer à l'isle de France douze filles paysannes de Bretagne, à chacune desquelles elle fait donner un petit trousseau. Son intention est que vous mariez ces filles s'il se peut dez leur arrivée, avec des soldats que vous connoistrez disposés à travailler à la terre, et auxquels sous cette condition et en se mariant le congé sera accordé." (12)

After the first arrivals, a number of land concessions were

made in the valley later to be known as Moka, because of the early attempts at coffee growing there. Military colonisation however was not a success. This was partly because the Compagnie reversed its policy of fostering coffee cultivation in île de France, for fear that overproduction would depress prices in the métropole. In a letter to the Conseil Provincial of the island, dated 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1729, the directors of the Compagnie stated that coffee cultivation should be confined to Bourbon, while in îsle de France the planters : "doivent s'attacher à cultiver le plus de vivres qu'il leur sera possible, à établir des basse-courts, à multiplier le bestail, à cultiver le poivre, la rhubarbe et autres espèces de drogueries .... Tous ces objets seront d'un bien plus g<sup>d</sup> avantage pour les habitants que celui du café, dont le prix seroit bien réduit lorsqu'ils seroient en état d'en fournir." (13)

The Conseil Provincial was to encourage this shift from coffee to provision crops, pepper and medicinal plants by favouring " dans les distributions de nègres et marchandises, ceux qui s'attacheront préférentiellement à ces sortes de cultures." In 1726 Lenoir had criticised the Compagnie for the shortage of merchandise on the island. The settlers' basic requirements in terms of clothing and agricultural implements were not met : "Le peu qu'on en trouvait était de mauvaise qualité de ne valait pas la moitié des prix de facture." (14) After plans for establishing coffee plantations in île de France were discarded, this neglect gave way to a rapacious exploitation. For instance the directors ordered that the policy of selling merchandise at fixed prices was to be replaced by the auctioning of scarce supplies to the highest bidders. Little wonder that most ex-soldiers and workmen wanted to leave their farms to return to France. (15)

Unscrupulous officials, in a location too remote for effective metropolitan control, could easily enrich themselves either at the Compagnie's expense, as when they imported slaves for their own account, or at that of the colonists, by allocating the choicest land and the bulk of scarce labour to themselves or their associates. On 3rd August, 1731, a former member of the Conseil Provincial, who had left île de France,

wrote to the Compagnie des Indes to complain of the misrule of Nicolas de Maupin : "Je me suis déclaré contre son sentiment partisan de l'établissement des concessions de l'île de France et opposé . . . . au transport des noirs qu'il envoyait sans connaissance ni facture de la dite isle à celle de Bourbon. " (16)

Maupin's successor, Mahé de Labourdonnais, has traditionally been regarded as the real founder of the colony. His achievements in the field of agriculture were, by prior standards at least, quite spectacular.

During his administration the free non-military element of the population increased substantially. In the 1720's the Compagnie was unable to induce any planters from Bourbon to settle in île de France, despite its offer of a six-year exemption from the 10% levy on agricultural production. As mentioned above military colonisation was a failure, while the immigration of settler families from France was not very significant. In March, 1735 Maupin estimated that there were no more than 50 planters established on the island. Eight years later the number of plantations had more than doubled, Baron Grant recording the existence of 115 estates, in a letter dated 1<sup>st</sup> June, 1743. (17) This increase was due largely to immigration, which soared as Port-Louis was turned into a major port and into the de facto administrative capital of the Mascarenes. (18)

Rural life was made more secure by the creation of a black maréchaussée, led by experienced woodsmen from Bourbon, which Labourdonnais used to flush out and destroy the maroon bands roaming in the interior. Maroon raids had previously posed a formidable threat to rural settlement. (19)

The shift from hunting and fishing to sedentary agriculture during Labourdonnais' administration was perhaps due most of all to the transformation of what was essentially a military settlement into a slave colony. This transformation was made possible by the introduction of the manioc or cassava root from Brazil and Saõ Tiago in the Cape Verde islands. Manioc grew rapidly, was more resistant to cyclones than wheat and maize, and soon became the staple food of the slave population. (20)

Labourdonnais is best remembered for promoting, and in some cases pioneering, the growing of tropical staples for export. (21)

Sugar-cane was first introduced into Mauritius by the Dutch in 1639. It was grown on a limited scale for the distilling of arrack, and it was not until 1694, that the rudimentary skills needed for the manufacture of sugar, were introduced by Jan Bockelberg, a surgeon, who had learned the art of sugar-processing in Surinam. A primitive sugar-mill was constructed and some samples of sugar and arrack sent to the Cape for examination, but little sugar was subsequently produced. (22)

Sugar-cultivation was neglected during the early years of French occupation. It was resuscitated by Labourdonnais in the early 1740's. The Dutch do not seem to have grown cotton and indigo : Labourdonnais pioneered the cultivation of these staples.

Given the nature of Compagnie rule and the absence of free product and factor markets, it was only men with influence, who could circumvent restrictive regulations with impunity, or, who had ready access to land, labour and capital, who were able to grow plantation crops successfully.

The Compagnie's land policy from the very start favoured such influential persons. Land concessions granted to senior officials were 132 hectares in extent, or twice the size of those granted to the other colonists. Governors were able to acquire even more extensive landholdings through various means. Thus Labourdonnais formed a partnership with Pierre d'Albert, a councillor, for the purchase of a plantation of 1 583 hectares at Pamplemousses. He acquired a share in the estate of de St.Martin, in the Grand Port area, and acquired land near Port-Louis as well. He was later accused "de s'être fait, sous des prétextes plus spéciaux que réels, concéder des terrains plus étendus que les limites prescrites." (23)

Labourdonnais used his considerable fortune to finance the erection of sugar-mills on his Pamplemousses and Grand Port estates. He secured the services of Louis Desportes Jean, who had acquired experience in the Antilles, to make improvements to his Pamplemousses factory. His mill in the south-east of the island was placed under the management of Pierre Moulinot de la Plaine, "ancien propriétaire sucrier de la Martinique." (24)

Labourdonnais pioneered the Mauritian slave trade and is reported to have sold blacks on his own account. He had ready access to

supplies of man-power for his plantations. The Compagnie was empowered to demand labour services from the slaves of the colonists. Labourdonnais is reputed to have made private use of these 'noirs de corvées'. (25)

After Labourdonnais' departure, the Compagnie gave strict instructions to his successors to concentrate on the growing of provisions and the raising of livestock. This policy was implemented by governors David, Bouvet de Lozier and René Magon. In 1757, a visitor to the island commented that, at the time of Labourdonnais, "la canne à sucre, l'indigo, le coton commençait à être cultivés dans cette île, mais la plupart de ces établissements ont péri par les vues contraires de ses successeurs". (26) Nonetheless, David and Magon used their influential positions to operate estates on which staple crops were grown. The first, shifted his official residence from Pamplémousses to Le Réduit, in the Moka uplands, in order to be near his estate. The second, purchased Labourdonnais' former sugar-estate of Villebague, in Pamplémousses from the Vigoureux brothers who had been unable to run it profitably. Magon transformed Villebague, which he found "dans un abandon absolu", into a model enterprise. However, the three sugar estates then operating in the island cannot be described as plantations, in terms of the definition given at the beginning of this chapter. Production, which consisted chiefly of cane spirits, was aimed at the local rather than at the external market, in contrast with the output of Labourdonnais's sugar-mills, which had found an outlet abroad. Some coffee was however still being grown for export, in spite of the Compagnie's ban on coffee cultivation. (27)

During the Seven Years War, île de France was used as a base for French naval operations in the Indian Ocean. This role placed a severe strain on colonial agriculture as labour was redirected into war-time activities, while demands on the agricultural sector were multiplied. As the insular population was swollen by troops and the crews of refitting squadrons, there was a mounting demand for food stuffs. This reinforced the shift from plantation to provision crops which had been initiated by official policy. This is why, in 1778, Jean Nicolas Céré, the director of the Jardin du Roi, who has witnessed the effects of the earlier conflict on insular agriculture, warned that although indigo cultivation now seemed very profitable, it was unlikely to spread amongst the colonists

if rumours of war between France and England were well-founded : "Mais nos colons, si la guerre vient, ne s'y jeteront pas de sitôt et feront des vivres et denrées." (28)

After the Seven Years War, the Duc de Choiseul planned to use île de France as a base for an attack on British settlements in India. Since the island had been unable to meet the revictualling needs of d'Aché's squadron during the war, the prohibition on the growing of staple crops was not lifted. Instead, as reported intelligence agent Lockhart Russel, "Money was lent by the government to the planters of Mauritius and Bourbon to enable them to stock their farms with cattle from Madagascar, to sow Indian corn and raise all those supplies which a much greater number than merely the inhabitants might require." (29)

After Choiseul's fall in 1770, there was renewed interest in staple cultivation, as a result of the substitution of the more liberal royal administration for the restrictive government of the Compagnie des Indes, and as île de France became an important commercial centre. The suspension of the Compagnie's charter in 1769 was a turning-point in the history of plantation agriculture in the island. It has been argued, I think incorrectly, that when in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century "une véritable fièvre de négoce s'empara des habitants", agriculture was neglected for commerce(30). There was, it is true, a shift away from provision crops as an island division of labour developed in the Mascarenes with Bourbon turning into a granary, and île de France into a port. An English traveller visiting the latter island in 1778 estimated that food production was not : "so abundant as to serve the inhabitants four months in the year. Their supplies for about eight months in twelve come from Bourbon, the Cape of Good Hope, Batavia and Europe." (31)

However there is no doubt that the development of plantation agriculture in île de France paralleled the rise of the island as a trading centre. Increased commercial activity directly benefited the cultivation of tropical staples for export. There was always a dearth of species on the island and a dire need for locally produced exportable commodities. It is thus

not surprising to find that many Port-Louis traders owned country estates and it is likely that much of the capital available to planters had mercantile origins. Traders, such as Jean-Baptiste Pipon and André Baudoin, acted as agents for absentee planters, looked for profitable outlets for the output of plantations and speculated in staple markets. (32) The preamble to the ordinance of 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1827, for establishing a Chamber of Commerce in the colony, pointed to an existing connection "entre le commerce et l'agriculture , par la besoin que celle-ci a sans cesse de se procurer de l'extérieur les objets indispensables pour la manipulation de ses produits, et de l'intermédiaire du commerce pour la vente et l'exportation de ses denrées." (33)

Half-a-century earlier such considerations were equally applicable.

In 1810, at the time of the British conquest, Irish naval surgeon James Prior, noting that a bewildering variety of crops was being cultivated in île de France, described the island as "a great warehouse of samples" (34). Nonetheless it can be shown that in the last two decades of French rule, there was a clear trend towards monoculture. It was then, especially during the 1790's, that large-scale sugar production for an external market became established as the island's most important agricultural activity.

The previous twenty years were years of experimentation with a variety of staple crops. One potentially profitable staple after another was cultivated, partly, because of the great receptivity of the Island's soil to tropical crops, and partly, because of a widespread attitude that île de France was merely a "lieu de passage". Baron D'Unienville felt that the colonists ; "ne s'attachaient qu'aux moyens de faire une fortune rapide par toutes sortes de voies, pour retourner promptement en France". (35) Pierre Poivre, the first royal intendant, reported that since Labourdonnais:

" the inhabitants have wandered from project to project, and endeavoured to cultivate every kind of plant, but without persevering to secure success. Coffee, cotton, indigo, sugar-canes, the pepper plant, the cinnamon tree, the tea plant, the mulberry tree, the cocoa and the rouco (Bixa Orleana Linn) , have been cultivated in their turn but without the knowledge and attention which is necessary to establish experiment." (36)

In the late 1760's the cultivation of coffee claimed the renewed attention of the colonists : "being of the most simple culture, and requiring less expence and establishments." (37) Coffee trees, planted 2 metres apart, lasted seven years, bearing fruit as of the third year. Each tree yielding about half-a-kilo of berries annually, coffee was much less demanding in labour than other staples, only one slave being required for the cultivation of 1 000 trees. After the harvest in May-June, the berries were dried on platforms, the beans were separated from their husks by pounding, were sorted and packed into woven bags for export. The famous agriculturalist de Cossigny, who grew coffee on his Palma plantation in the quarter of Black River, had devised an even less labour-using method. "It is usual in the Isles of France and Bourbon", he wrote, "to dry the coffee cherry and afterwards pound it, in order to take away the envelopes of the bean according to the method of the Arabs of Yemen. I caused a water-mill to be built upon my plantation which turns one millstone over another that is immoveable. The coffee in the shell falls of itself from the loft, which is above, between two millstones, and the necessary process is performed without the labour of hands. Nothing more was to be done but to separate the berries by winnowing and take away those that were spoiled or bruised." (38)

De Cossigny was by far the most successful coffee planter in île de France. A visitor from Bourbon wrote to Céré on this subject as follows: "J'ai vu avec autant de plaisir que d'étonnement sa cafeterie. Je puis attester qu'il n'y en a pas une à Bourbon qui soit si complète et qui est tenue comme celle là . . . . je vous avoue aussi que je n'ai point vu personne planter et cultiver des caféiers avec autant d'attention que cet habile habitant." (39)

When the above observation was made in 1778, coffee cultivation had failed everywhere else in the island. Even though coffee-trees were kept from growing to their natural height by lopping, the coffee-walks were devastated by a succession of violent cyclones. Cossigny planted hedges of Bois noir,

which he introduced from North Africa, to shelter his coffee plants from these storms. In 1776 a disease broke out in coffee plantations, giving a severe setback to the industry. The Palma plantation however was unscathed. In the opinion of the visitor from Bourbon, this was the real reason for Cossigny's success : "J'attribue moins à ses soins qu'à sa position la réussite de ces travaux ... Ce sont deux insectes qui font périr les caféiers. Sans doute qu'il y en a moins dans le quartier de M. de Cossigny qu'ils ont un ennemi qui en diminue le nombre."(40)

Coffee cultivation at Île de France recovered in the 1780's and 1790's but it never spread to the same extent as in Bourbon. This was attributed to the former island's lighter and shallower soils. Soil fertility was thus rapidly exhausted, and after 12 to 15 years the coffee trees perished and it became necessary to move the plantation to new land. At Palma however, the soil seemed suitable for nothing else but coffee cultivation. Cossigny himself admitted: "Je crois en effet être le seul qui ait mis de la constance à renouveler ma cafeterie et à l'augmenter. Plusieurs raisons que vous devinez aisément m'y ont déterminé. La plus essentielle est que ma terre, trop pierreuse, ne comporte guère d'autres cultures."(41)

Pierre Poivre sent two expeditions to the Moluccas in 1769-1770 and in 1771-1772 under the Malay-speaking Provost to fetch spice-trees that he planned to cultivate at Île de France. Both expeditions brought back clove and nutmeg plants, but Poivre did not succeed in turning the colony into a second Amboina or Banda. In 1771 he wrote to Minister de Boynes that the colonists were unwilling to bear the expense of establishing spice plantations : "I have observed with deep chagrin that most of our cultivators having calculated the time required by the plants to bear fruit, by the seedlings to grow and to provide rich cargoes of commerce have shown the greatest indifference for the cultivation of the spices."(42)

The plants were raised in nurseries at the Jardin du Roi, where a first crop of cloves was reaped in 1776, and one of nutmegs in 1778. In that year the Jardin's director was still not in a position to distribute spice plants to interested colonists. In a letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> August, he wrote : " Je n'ai point encore pensé à rendre publique la manière de soigner, d'élever, de conserver, les muscadiers et les girofliers, parceque nous ne sommes pas encore bien précisément au moment de faire quelque distribution de ce genre à nos colons. " (43)

When large-scale distribution was undertaken in 1786, the colonists showed little enthusiasm. As Céré put it in a letter to his superiors : "ils n'ont eu, à bien dire, que de l'indifférence pour les antofles ou Baies de Giroflier". (44) By contrast the Bourbon planters showed great interest in the cultivation of "épiceries fines". The nutmeg was never grown on a very large-scale but in the 1790's commercial production of cloves was well under way in Bourbon. Thence cloves reached Cayenne, and ultimately Zanzibar, which became the world's most important clove producer in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. (45)

A small fraction of Céré's voluminous correspondence, published in the Revue Rétrospective de l'île Maurice, is an invaluable account of the state reached by staple agriculture in île de France at the end of the 1770's. As stated above, coffee cultivation had failed by then, while spice production was still at an experimental stage. But in a letter to a former governor of the island, Charles-Louis d'Arzac de Ternay, Céré stated : " Nos colons commencent à se jeter aux indigoteries, cotoneries et sucreries et à penser sérieusement à faire des objets d'exportations de différents genres. Les cafféteries ont péri; mais dans peu d'années cette perte sera rétablie. " (46)

Céré was unduly optimistic about the coffee industry's potential for recovery. As argued previously, the island's soils were not idéal for coffee cultivation. Prospects for the other staples were brighter however. The traveller Mackintosh, remarked in 1778 that île de France " has produced very good cotton and indigo; and it is indeed to these two last mentioned commodities that the soil seems best adapted. " (47)

Two years previously Abbé Raynal estimated that "no more than forty thousand weight of cotton has yet been gathered. This last commodity is of a good kind, and everything promises an increase of it". Cotton production did expand subsequently but it was subject to geographical limits, doing well essentially in the dry and stony soils of the west coast. (48)

Indigo is not listed at all by Abbé Raynal, amongst the exports of Île de France for 1776. When Mackintosh arrived in the island, it was still not being grown on a commercial scale, but its cultivation was being pioneered by a handful of colonists, led by the able Cossigny, Céré's close friend and regular correspondent. On the 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1778 Cossigny wrote : "enfin dans le courant de la semaine j'essayerai à faire de l'indigo dans mes cuves." Céré was anxious to find out about these "premiers essais en grand de l'indigo". On the 16<sup>th</sup> July, he said : "J'attends avec impatience le résultat des cuves commercées samedi dernier. Soyez sûr que plusieurs habitants ont les yeux sur vous, sur vos opérations pour se déterminer oui ou non à la culture de l'indigo, ce serait un très grand malheur pour la Colonie que vous ne fussiez pas content du produit." (49)

Céré's father, who had been Pondichéry's port captain in 1728, and who had settled at Île de France in 1730 had grown indigo, brought from the West Indies, very successfully until his plantations were destroyed by insects. 'Le grand François', presumably an old slave, who could still remember the early methods of cultivating and processing indigo, was not infrequently consulted by Céré on behalf of his friend. However Cossigny preferred to learn by himself through observation and experimentation. He wrote to Céré : " Je n'ai pas besoin que vous m'envoyiez votre noir. Je ne voudrais même pas du plus habile indigotier parceque je veux apprendre ce métier par moi même." (50)

Although he was not unwilling to learn from others, Cossigny was clearly convinced of the superiority of the scientific approach. For instance he dismissed the opinions of the associates Vigneron and Stirling, owners of an indigo plantation, on the grounds that : " par ce que, n'ayant pas les mêmes connaissances que moi sur la substance de l'indigo, ils n'avaient pas les mêmes raisons." (51)

Cossigny discussed his "essais chimiques sur la féculé d'indigo" with Monneron, who had studied chemistry in Paris : "M. de Monneron arrivé nouvellement du Bengale, où il établit une manufacture d'indigo, en société avec son frère se connaît en féculé. Il a trouvé les échantillons de Belle Eau les plus beaux de tous ceux que je lui ai montrés. Il a été fort content de mon précipitant et le regarde comme une découverte. Il m'a beaucoup encouragé sur la culture et la fabrique de l'indigo." (52)

Cossigny went to great lengths to improve his knowledge of indigo-making. He asked Céré to find out what he could about the methods of processing of indigo in India. A mutual friend living in Pondichéry, Brunel, wrote to the latter in mid-July, 1778 on this subject : " J'ai répondu aux 28 questions sur l'indigo proposées par M. de Cossigny. On les traduit maintenant ..... Ce n'est pas mon cher, chose facile d'obtenir ces sortes de solutions. J'ai été obligé d'envoyer dans les terres à plus de 10 lieues d'ici et je doute que malgré mes soins, vous ayez lieu d'être satisfait de la prose malabare, quoique traduite littéralement en notre langue." (53)

On the 5<sup>th</sup> September, Céré sent Brunel's mémoire to Cossigny with the comment that : "cette méthode de fabriquer l'indigo est neuve pour moi, longue, embarrassante et demande beaucoup de main-d'oeuvre .... je la trouve curieuse, mais minutieuse et moins expéditive que la nôtre." (54) There were several varieties of indigo growing on the island, but Cossigny attempted to obtain seeds from Fort Dauphin and Antongil Bay, in Madagascar, and from the Far East. On the 23<sup>rd</sup> July, he wrote to Céré: "J'ai lu dans un auteur que l'indigo de Java était le plus beau de tous. Il faudra en faire venir des graines par la première occasion qui ira à Batavia. Faites-en venir aussi de la Chine." (55)

Several other planters attempted to cultivate indigo at this time. For example, Aubert, in the south-east of the island, had seven

varieties of indigo growing in his fields. Lory, of Mon Destin estate wrote to Céré that he had been unable to pay him a visit because "Je suis tellement occupé à monter mon indigoterie." Another planter, Rivaltz, lost an indigo crop because of heavy rains. His fields were located "dans un quartier très froid mais pluvieux". Many of these pioneers made use of Cossigny's technical expertise. Others drew on the practical experience of men such as Vigneron and Stirling, or of Rivière, who had lived in the Antilles. Thus on the 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1778, Céré sent two samples of indigo dye to Aubert, with a note stating : "Cy-joint No. 1, un morceau d'indigo fait par mon père il y a 32 ans, et No. 2, du beaucoup plus beau encore fait nouvellement par le Sieur Rivière, patricien de l'Amérique, chez M. de Chazal à la Montagne Longue, avec l'indigo Céré. Voilà aussi la petite tente de graines envoyée par M. de Cossigny pour vous." (56)

The first indigo-growers were the trail-blazers. They demonstrated the technical feasibility of indigo production in the colony at a time when coffee plantations had failed and when an alternative export crop was required. But for indigo cultivation to spread in the island it had to be shown to pay. Although Céré and Cossigny were interested in agriculture for its own sake, they were far from unconcerned with its economic aspects. Thus Cossigny tried to gauge the extent of Indian competition. He also calculated that the high price paid for indigo, relative to the costs of establishing and operating an 'indigoterie', warranted its large-scale cultivation in the colony. We know of this only indirectly from Céré's replies to his friend. For instance on the 26<sup>th</sup> July, Céré wrote : " En estimant ces 10 livres d'indigo à 8 L. la livre, c'est une belle journée qui ne coûte que des herbes, et ce produit, outre tous ces avantages, n'a pas l'inconvénient comme les grains de se gâter dans les magasins et de se réduire à rien. Un noir qui vous en portera 100 livres au port, vous portera donc la valeur de 800 L.

Quelle différence d'un homme comme celui-là avec celui qui porte 100 livres de maïs pour 6 L. que le roi le paye! Vous voyez que cette culture est une des plus riches et des plus séduisantes qu'on puisse faire dans le monde. " (57)

On the 16<sup>th</sup> August, he commented : "Effectivement une indigoterie, à ce prix, n'est pas chère, et donnera peut-être à d'autres l'envie d'en entreprendre de nouvelles. (58)

As stated on page 43 above, Céré feared from earlier experience that the outbreak of war would cause a shift from plantation to provision crops. It seems however that the American war of Independence (1778-1782) had exactly the opposite effect on insular agriculture. During the war the island was visited by neutral and American trading ships in large numbers. The merchant ships purchased the prizes captured by corsairs operating from île de France, as well as tropical staples. This commercial activity persisted in peace time, as Port-Louis became a port franc, boosting plantation agriculture. The islanders still speculated with a variety of staple crops. Ly Tio Fane tells us : "L'audace des spéculateurs de l' Ile de France se manifesta en particulier lorsque le S. du Quilio, ayant appris qu'il y avait une disette de café de Moka en France, en envoya une cargaison à Lorient en 1789. " (59)

There is evidence though that indigo had become the chief export crop. In 1790 Philip Gidley King, later governor of New South Wales, wrote : "The general object of cultivation on this island is the indigo from which four to five crops a year are procured. One person sent to Europe in 1789 thirty thousand (livres) of a very superior quality. " (60)

As the growing of coffee, cotton and indigo in turn caught the interest of Mauritian planters, sugar-cane cultivation experienced a relative decline. There were only three sugar-mills in the island in 1776 : as many as in 1755, when the population had been considerably smaller. Only a small quantity of sugar of an inferior quality was produced. According to Pridham, it was even used in construction : "It was employed to cover houses in the Italian manner, and being incorporated with chalk, formed a kind of mastic, which, spread on planks, became as hard as a pavement. " (61)

Sugar for local consumption had to be imported from abroad, chiefly from Batavia, the Far East's principal supplier. (62) Céré attributed the lack

of progress of the colony's sugar industry to its distance from the French and continental markets and to competition from the better located Antilles. A local market for sugar was also unlikely to flourish so long as cheap sugar from the Indies was available in the colony, he said. (63) In 1785, Le Brasseur, 'commissaire général des colonies', on a visit to the Mascarenes, came to broadly the same conclusions. In a letter to the Minister of Marine, he wrote :

"L'Isle de France, par sa position ne peut pas être une Colonie à sucre, et quand elle aurait l'espérance très fugitive d'avoir un jour une trentaine de sucreries, qui lui produiront tout au plus six à sept millions de sucre noir, il ne paraît pas possible qu'elle puisse jamais entrer en concurrence avec les autres Colonies dans les marchés d'Europe; son grand éloignement, le prix du fret et des instruments de culture, le défaut d'eau pour les moulins dans les terres qui y sont propres; la difficulté d'avoir des mulets, une infinité d'autres circonstances physiques et morales, tout concourt à faire croire que nous ne devons attendre d'elles aucun retour de productions coloniales, et que si par hasard on en fait un jour la plus mince exportation, elles ne pourront certainement payer les frais, ou procurer un peu de bénéfice, qu'à Mascate ou à Surate, où il est encore très probable que les Hollandais avec leur beau sucre de Batavia auront toujours la préférence; on ne doit même pas douter qu'ils ne trouvent des moyens très efficaces pour renverser tous les projets de sucrerie dont je vois avec peine que beaucoup d'habitants de cette Colonie sont fort occupés." (64).

The 'projets de sucrerie', which so alarmed Le Brasseur, were not directed at sugar manufacturing however. Instead the bulk of the sugar crop was used in the making of cane spirit. In 1789 for instance only 304 tonnes of sugar were produced against 2,7 million litres of arrack or 'guildive' as the colonial product was known. Guildive was part of the slave traders outgoing cargo and found a ready market in the entire western

Indian Ocean region. It was used both as a means of payment, and as gifts to the Malagasy and mainland slave dealers. As early as 1729, Lanux, a slave trader, remarked : "Il en faut pour en faire boire  
journallement aux insulaires qui viennent traiter  
à bord, aux équipages de pirogues, à ceux enfin  
qui rendent quelque service au vaisseau et qui  
tous ne cessent de persécuter pour boire de  
l'eau de vie." (65)

A bottle of spirits was worth  $\frac{1}{2}$  piastre in the north of Madagascar in 1774, and in 1776 it was reported that two young female slaves had been purchased for 120 bottles. A quarter of a century later cane spirits still featured prominently in the slave traders' cargo. Charles François Tombe , describing slave-trading practices in Madagascar, where it was customary to take a local woman as concubine and commercial intermediary, stated that : "Pendant la durée de la traite, les parens vous rendent  
souvent visite : il faut leur faire de petits présens,  
surtout en arrak dont ils sont très amateurs." (66)

There was a rapid expansion of the slave trade to the Mascarenes, especially from 1786 to 1794, and one can assume that it resulted in a parallel expansion in the cultivation of sugar-cane and in the production of arrack. (67)

Colonial rum had a regional market tied to the slave trade. It could not be exported to Europe because of its indifferent quality. But during the War of American Independence, a decrease in wine and spirit exports from France to the islands, increased the demand for arrack amongst the Mascarenean population, swollen by the arrival of metropolitan troops. This acted as an incentive for several colonists to introduce or expand sugar-cane cultivation on their estates. Thus, in December 1779, a sugar-mill and distilling plant was commissioned on the vast estate of Bénarés, in the south of the island. Two years later, the estate's 'régisseur', Jacques Nicolas de Forançis, obtained a contract to supply 525 000 litres of cane spirits to the administration. When peace returned however, Forançis' contract was prematurely terminated and he was ruined. Only a sustained demand for arrack could warrant the tying up of nearly 30 000 livres of capital in a sugar-mill and distillery. (68)

The outbreak of war with England in 1794 once again cut off French supplies of alcoholic drinks to the Mascarenes. This probably raised local demand for arrack, but not to the same extent as during the previous conflict. Some improvement in the quality of the island product had been achieved in the early 1780's, but it was only temporary. Milbert, who resided in île de France at the turn of the century refused to drink the local rum, with his meals, in the place of wine, because of the former's product's bad taste and unhealthiness : " le tafia, tel qu'on le prépare actuellement est de très mauvaise qualité : il attaque les nerfs et occasionne des tremblements aux personnes qui en font un trop fréquent usage. " (69)

Moreover neutral ships, visiting the island in larger numbers than ever before, could supply it with superior products of foreign manufacture. (70) At the same time a fall in the volume of the slave trade may have reduced the regional market for arrack. (71)

Nevertheless the decade of the 1790's was marked by an impressive expansion of sugar-cane cultivation and by a rapid increase in the number of sugar-mills operating in île de France. How can this be accounted for?

During the 1790's indigo plantations on the island failed, creating a need for an alternative staple crop. The failure of indigo cultivation was linked to internal as well as to external factors. In the first place, the indigo fields were destroyed by insects. (72) At the same time indigo sales abroad ran into difficulties, as export markets were lost to Great Britain. "L'indigo n'est plus cultivé comme anciennement," wrote a contemporary observer, "ce n'est plus un article d'une demande soutenue depuis 1797, que les Anglais en apportent du Bengale une quantité plus que suffisante pour la consommation de toute l'Europe." (73)

The rise of the indigo industry in Bengal was associated with a soaring demand for dyestuffs from the expanding English cotton industry and with the collapse of indigo production in St. Domingue after the black revolution of 1791. The superiority of the Bengali product was due primarily to its low cost. As cheap Indian indigo swamped European markets, rival

producers were squeezed out, indigo production being reduced or abandoned throughout the New World and the Caribbean. (74) In Île de France, indigo planters could not match the quality, let alone the low-cost of the Indian product. Although its dye-content was high, the indigo manufactured in the humid climate of the island was not easily marketable in its final form. A letter published in the Journal des Isles de France et de la Réunion of the 6 prairial an II ( 4 th June, 1794 ) pointed out that : "La difficulté de sécher promptement à fait prendre ici à plusieurs indigotiers le parti de faire les pains petits presque comme des dez à jouer ; cela nuit beaucoup à la vente, depuis sur-tout que l'on sait par expérience, que les acheteurs, en Europe, font une différence de quarante sols par livre et quelquefois d'avantage. C'est un fait dont il n'est plus permis de douter : les comptes de ventes, les lettres, les personnes qui arrivent de France nous le confirment. Nous exhortons MM. les cultivateurs d'indigo à donner à leurs pains une coupe plus marchande ; il est possible d'y parvenir puisqu'on le fait au Bengale, à St. Domingue, etc." (75)

The depression in Île de France's indigo industry was severe, protracted and irreversible. Indigo-growers turned to sugar-cane cultivation which was proving more lucrative. As the area cultivated in indigo shrank, that planted under cane increased from 422 hectares in 1789 to a peak of 5 000 - 6 300 hectares in 1803, at which date more than 80 'indigoteries' had been abandoned. (76)

Sugar-cultivation was spurred by the total collapse of the sugar-industry in St. Domingue and by the resulting excess demand for colonial sugar in continental markets.

In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, France rather than England was the principal supplier of colonial products, especially sugar and coffee, to the norther European market. In 1789-90 the French

Antilles exported 185 m. livres worth of colonial produce, 72,4 % of which consisted of sugar and coffee. Of this 33 million livres worth was consumed locally and 152 m. livres reexported to Europe, North America and the Levant. This reexporting of tropical staples was the key to France's favourable Balance of Trade. The secret of French commercial successes, despite extensive territorial losses during the Seven Years War, lay in her West Indian possessions, of which Saint-Domingue was by far the most important:

"Saint-Domingue supplied half of Europe with tropical produce. Its exports were one third more than those of all the British West Indies combined; its commerce employed 1 000 ships and 15 000 French sailors. Saint-Domingue was the world's premier sugar producer, the gem of the Caribbean." (77)

The superiority of Saint-Domingue's sugar industry, over that of Barbados and Jamaica in particular, was due neither to technological superiority nor, as Adam Smith believed, to the availability of capital from local sources as opposed to British West Indian dependence on metropolitan merchants for funds; but to the greater fertility and higher productivity of its soil which yielded 4,9 tonnes per hectare as against a Jamaican yield of 1,0 - 1,5 tonnes. The Saint-Domingue planter was able to undersell his British rival in the continental market, while the greater profitability of French sugar estates and untapped demand abroad led to a remarkable expansion of sugar-production to a peak of 71 392 tonnes in 1791, when 792 sugar-mills were in operation. (78)

This important industry was dealt a death blow by the Black Revolution (1791-1804) by which Saint-Domingue's slaves gained their freedom and independence. A slave revolt breaking out on the Lenormand de Mézy plantation under the leadership of Bouckman on 14<sup>th</sup> August, 1791, soon engulfed the northern province which with 396 sugar-works had been the island's most important sugar-producing region. Although the south and west remained in the hands of the planters, sugar production there was drastically reduced as a result of the general chaos and confusion of internecine warfare between 'grands blancs' and 'mulâtres', of the dearth of labour as slaves deserted en masse to join their self-emancipated brothers in the north or the mercenary armies of the various contenders for power

in the rest of the island, and of an exodus of white colonists, especially in 1791, 1793 and 1804, which deprived the sugar industry of valuable technical (especially in the manufacture of white clayed sugar) and entrepreneurial skills. (79)

Saint-Domingue, renamed Haiti, was never to regain its former position as the world's greatest sugar producer. Although production was revived in the north under the rule of Christophe (1806-1820) : "through a kind of military feudalism based on forced labour without the name of slavery" ; in the south, the great estates were broken up and sugar output declined to insignificant proportions as the land was turned over to small-scale peasant cultivation. (80) The decline of the sugar industry is depicted in Table 1, 1.

TABLE 1, 1.     Sugar Production in St. Domingue and Haiti 1787-1825 (81)  
in tonnes

<u>Year</u>	<u>Clayed</u>	<u>Muscovado</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Clayed</u>	<u>Muscovado</u>	<u>Total</u>
1787	27 648	33 859	61 507	1819	-	1 854	1 854
1788	34 563	43 828	78 391	1820	1	1 230	1 231
1789	25 693	45 747	71 440	1821	-	294	294
1791	34 364	45 594	79 958	1822	-	97	97
1801	8	9 072	9 080	1823	-	7	7
1818	-	2 672	2 672	1824	-	2	2

The collapse of St. Domingue's staple industries created a dire shortage of colonial produce in French and continental markets and gave a strong impetus to increased staple production elsewhere.

In the Caribbean the main beneficiaries of this impulse were Jamaica and Cuba, sugar-production in these countries increasing as indicated in Table 1, 2.

TABLE I, 2. Sugar Production of Jamaica and Cuba 1790-1809. (82)  
annual average in tonnes

Period	Jamaica	Index (1790-4 = 100)	Cuba	Index (1790-4 = 100)
1790-4	58 127	100	18 181	100
1795-9	64 010	110	24 766	136
1800-04	82 035	141	34 886	192
1805-09	89 474	154	37 680	207

Increased Jamaican production was prompted by rising prices on British markets, especially from 1795 to 1799, as British reexports of sugar to northern Europe via Hamburg rocketed. The price of 50,8 kgs of muscovado, rising from 54s 3d in 1792, to 69s 2d in 1796, and to a peak of 87s in 1799, justified substantial increases in Jamaican sugar production and exports: "despite wartime rises in costs of production, freights and insurance and despite the steady increase in duties on colonial produce". (83)

It was Cuba however, rather than Jamaica, that was destined to replace St. Domingue as the West Indian premier sugar producer. Its prosperity was to be built on a decree of 1789 authorising an unrestricted importation of slaves into the Spanish colony, an influx of French refugees from St. Domingue that introduced techniques revolutionising the Cuban industry and to an abundance of fertile land in an island ten times the size of overcropped Jamaica, but much less populated. (84)

There were no significant increases in the sugar production of the other West Indian sugar islands. In the East, Java failed to respond to the opportunities arising from the collapse of supplies from St. Domingue, its sugar industry being in a chaotic state in the last years of V.O.C. rule. Rising prices at home induced the English East India Company to expand its exports to England, these rising from 183 tonnes in 1791 to a high point, unequalled until 1820, of 10 014 tonnes in 1800. However the East Indian infant industry was unable to participate fully in the sugar-boom of the 1790's because of the opposition of vested West Indian interests, its sugar being subject to a discriminatory duty of 41s 10d

per 50,8 kgs or 29s 7d more than that levied on West Indian sugar. Figures available for the first four shipments made by the company in 1791 indicate that profits margin were very small. The 203,9 tonnes brought in a gross return of £ 22 204 of which 21,0% was invoice value, 29,9% freight charges, 5,0% merchandise charges, 38,3% duty paid and only 5,8% profits. (85)

That profits were : "not of a nature to encourage further business" (86) is apparent in Table 1, 3 listing East Indian sugar exports from 1791 to 1815 which it can be seen declined continually after a peak in 1796-1800.

TABLE 1, 3.     East Indian Sugar Exports 1791 - 1815.     (87)  
annual average in tonnes

<u>Period</u>	<u>Annual Average Exports</u>	<u>Index 1796-1800 = 100</u>	<u>No. 1791-5 = 100</u>
1791 - 95	3 278	143	100
1796 - 1800	7 581	100	231
1801 - 1805	4 769	62	145
1806 - 1810	3 097	40	94
1811 - 1815	2 938	39	90

Of all France's remaining colonial possessions, only the Mascarenes in the Indian Ocean showed prospects of developing a viable sugar industry to fill the vacuum that the loss of St. Domingue had created in the French colonial system. In the Antilles, Martinique was under British rule from 1794 to 1802. Sugar production actually declined in Guadeloupe, where slavery had been replaced by a system of compulsory, though nominally free, labour; and where the planter class had been eradicated in reprisals for having collaborated with the British during the occupation (1793-4); and Cayenne produced little sugar, its industry stagnating for most of the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. (88)

In île de France, planters reacted to St. Domingue's demise as France's foremost supplier of sugar, at the processing stage, by shifting from the distilling of cane spirits or "guildive" to the manufacture of sugar, the production of sugar rising tenfold from 300 tonnes in 1789

to 3 000 tonnes in 1803, while the output of guildive fell by half from 2,7 million litres to 1,36 million litres in the same period. According to Milbert's estimates, sugar was then by far the most valuable of plantation crops.

Milbert gives no details of the value of coffee production, but he estimates the relative worth of sugar, arrak, cotton and indigo as amounting to 292 500 piastres for sugar, 99 000 piastres for arrack, 80 000 for cotton and 50 000 for indigo - a total value of 521 500 piastres - of which sugar accounted for 56%. (89) Meanwhile the number of sugar factories, which had remained stationary since Labourdonnais, rose from 3 in 1778, to 10 in 1798, and to 60-80 in 1801-3, although the latter figure also included some 'guildiveries'. The area planted under cane, as stated on page 55 above, rose from about 400 hectares in 1789 to 5 000 - 6 300 hectares in 1803. (90)

The lack of continuous statistics of sugar production or of land utilisation creates a problem of timing, and although we can assume that the end of the Peace of Amiens coincided with a peak in output, we are unable to pinpoint the upturn in production statistics accurately. News of events in St. Domingue, of the scarcity of tropical produce and high prices in France, not only had to reach île de France, but some 'reaction time' has to be allowed for the planters to recognise and grasp profitable opportunities, plant sugar-cane, erect factories etc... Such knowledge was available in île de France as early as 1792, when a local agent wrote to his principal in India that he had purchased a large quantity of sugar, in view of dearth on the French market : "Tout annonce . . . . que cet objet ne diminuera pas de longtemps en France, vu la situation de l'Amérique et le discrédit des assignats qui font également baisser notre papier-monnaie. Les dernières notes que j'ai reçues de France cotent le sucre à 250 livres le cent." (91)

However the outbreak of a fierce smallpox epidemic in June of that year brought the colonial economy to a standstill. Within three months reports de Villèle who was an eye-witness to these events, " le tiers de la population noire fut enlevée, et la moitié des familles blanches furent plongées dans le deuil!"(92) Baron D'Unienville estimated that

from June to October 1792, 8 % of the civilian population, or nearly 5 000 people perished. Though lower than de Villèle's figures this was equivalent to the very high mortality rate of 192 ‰ per annum. It is very unlikely that any significant changes in the sugar-industry took place against this bleak background. (93)

As a further lag of two years had to be allowed between the time of planting new land under cane and that of harvesting and milling, an upturn in production figures would be expected in 1794 at the earliest; the shift from indigo cultivation from 1797 accelerating their ascent to a peak in 1803. The evidence of a contemporary observer, lends support to this scenario, Charles Francis Tombe, in the island in 1803, writing that : "Ce n'est que depuis six ans environs que beaucoup d'habitans se sont livrés entièrement à la culture de la canne à sucre, sur une partie des terrains qui servaient aux indigoteries. La ruine totale de plusieurs de ceux qui ont commencé, occasionnée par les dépenses énormes que nécessitent ces établissemens et les usines, n'a pas empêché qu'il ne s'y soit formé des sucreries considérables et de guildiveries (fabriques d'arack). Ces établissemens une fois formés, offrent de grands profits. La qualité du sucre est à peu près la même qu'à St. Domingue." (94)

Prentout tells us of a more permanent type of immigrant settling in the colony in larger numbers in the 1780's and 1790's : "A genuine emigration from Europe and above all from the Antilles took place; on the other hand the inhabitants who felt sheltered from the thunderstorms of the Revolution were no longer as anxious, as formerly, to return to France."(95) While there is no direct evidence to support this view, it is plausible that some of the emigrants from the Antilles possessed the skills of sugar technology and contributed to the development of the sugar industry in that period. In any case, it is certain that the rise of a stable settler class must have contributed significantly to the development of colonial agriculture.

Although it established sugar as île de France's principal export staple and thus proved of great long-term significance, the boom of the 1790's was short-lived. It was brought to an end by overspeculation and the loss of markets caused by the growing effectiveness of British naval opposition in the following decade.

The capital requirements of sugar plantations were greater than those of estates engaged in indigo production, but in the 1790's credit was readily available to sugar planters. Factory rollers were kept turning by foreign plunder. As early as October 1790, the Merchant of Bombay, a captured vessel carrying a cargo worth 1,5 million francs was brought to the island. Between 1793 and 1802, over one hundred naval cruises against enemy shipping set off from île de France, returning with prizes estimated at £2,5 million in gross value. About two-thirds of the cruises were undertaken on the initiative of Port-Louis merchants, who fitted out trading vessels for privateering or "commerce raiding". Foreign plunder attracted neutral traders to the island. In all probability it also made the sugar boom of the 1790's possible. (96) Although planter indebtedness was extensive, it did not at first weigh heavily on the agriculturalists, since debt repayment was facilitated by rampant inflation, brought about, not only by the injection of foreign treasure into the insular economy, but also by the overissue of a paper currency : the 'livre coloniale'.

The Colonial Assembly, set up in April, 1790, was dominated by the planters. Short of funds to meet government spending, this body raised the required finance by levying import duties, from the sale of enemy ships captured by the navy, from sale taxes levied on prizes seized by privateers, and especially, by printing paper money. An assembly made up of landed proprietors was naturally reluctant to impose a tax on land, or on agricultural exports to raise revenue. This attitude and the pinch of inflation, says A. Maure in his Souvenirs d'un vieux Colon de l'île Maurice, alienated the republican soldiers and the wage-earners of the capital, the 'population mécontente'. (97)

The overissue of the paper livre led to a rapid depreciation of that currency. At the end of the century, a report, drawn up for the Directoire in France, pointed out : "Avant l'arrivée du contre-amiral Sercey (1796), il existait dans les deux îles

deux cents millions de papier-monnaie en circulation; par les manoeuvres de l'agiotage et les demandes multipliées de l'Assemblée Coloniale, ce numéraire factice s'élève aujourd'hui à quinze cents millions.

L'Ile de la Réunion n'en reçoit plus en échange de ses denrées; cette masse énorme pèse sur la seule Ile de France; aussi la piastre-gourde y vaut-elle dix mille livres de cette monnaie dépréciée." (98)

Depreciation of the paper livre led the Colonial Assembly to suspend the repayment of loans. This hurt the creditors badly. The latter had no desire to be paid in a worthless currency however, and, when the Assembly envisaged ending the suspension, they called for reimbursement of the real, rather than the nominal, value of the sums lent. A committee was appointed to debate the issue, but, as four out of its five members were "partisans des débiteurs ou débiteurs eux-mêmes", this body ignored the merchants' representations. (99)

As in the Antilles, town became pitted against plantation. The creditors, with the aid of the wage-earning 'petits blancs', who had suffered most from the inflation, took control of the capital on the 15 Brumaire, An VII (4th November, 1798) and forced Malartic, the governor, to dissolve the Assembly. Three days later, armed planters flocked to Port-Louis in large numbers, put down the insurrection and obtained the exile of the leading insurgents to France. The latter however were mostly 'sans-culottes', as few of the wealthy merchants could be implicated. Moreover in the face of hostile public opinion, the planters were unable to regain their stranglehold on the colony's political and economic life. A reconstituted Colonial Assembly took steps to restore monetary stability. Milbert tells us that merchandise on the captured vessel Resolution, worth 200 000 piastres was exchanged against paper money at the rate of 5 000 colonial livres per piastre, and that the paper money so acquired was publicly burnt. Two imposts of 36 000 and 100 000 piastres in value were made redeemable in paper currency only, one piastre being held equal to 10 000 livres. When Decaen became governor in 1803, he is reported to have bought a large volume of the depreciated banknotes with 20 000 piastres. It is indicative of the

political roots of the inflation that it could only be halted after the fall of the planter-dominated Colonial Assembly in 1798. Government revenue was subsequently drawn from other sources. For example, as from 1799 duties were raised on the export of agricultural products. (100)

As monetary stability was restored the full burden of debt was placed squarely on the shoulders of the planters. As a result of earlier overspeculation, the sugar industry experienced difficulties in the first decade of the nineteenth century. As D'Unienville put it, the ruin of the sugar planters was the consequence : "Du luxe avec lequel furent formés ces établissements. Luxe résultant des calculs exagérés auxquels se livraient ceux qui, dans la situation des Antilles ne voyaient plus l'île de France que destinée à être la seule devant subvenir à l'approvisionnement de la France en ce genre." (101)

The sugar-industry was also affected by the loss of its export markets during the years of renewed conflict. As production figures are not available, statistics of land utilisation have to be resorted to, in sketching the fortunes of the sugar-industry after 1803.

From a maximum of 5000- 6 300 hectares in that year, the area cultivated in sugar-cane fell to 4 300 hectares in 1806, rose slightly to 4 600 hectares in 1808, and fell sharply to less than 3 850 hectares in 1810 (Table 1,4) The initial decline was, as argued above, a reaction to overspeculation, but that from 1806 to 1810 must be examined in terms of the experience of the plantation sector as a whole.

TABLE 1, 4. Land Utilisation in Cultivated Area 1806 -1810.  
i. in hectares                      ii Index (1806 =100)

	Year	Sugar	Indigo	Cotton	Coffee	Cloves	Plantation Crops	Provision Crops	Total Area cultivated
i.	1806	4 314	1 044	3 877	912	314	10 462	19 420	29 881
	1808	4 604	699	3 080	923	115	9 422	24 269	33 690
	1810	3 848	854	2 548	1 128	86	8 465	22 879	31 343
ii.	1806	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
	1808	107	67	79	101	37	90	125	113
	1810	89	82	66	124	27	81	118	105

The resumption of war in May 1803 recast île de France in its traditional rôle as a strategic naval base. During the years of semi-autonomy (1790-1803) laws fostering the cultivation of provision crops in wartime had been disregarded. They were re-enacted and enforced by Decaen, whose priority was to make the island self-sufficient in foodstuffs. When île Bonaparte (Bourbon) was devastated by cyclones in 1806 and 1807, it could no longer serve as île de France's granary, and the latter island was forced to increase its output of provisions. From 1806 to 1808, as a result of compulsion and necessity, the area cultivated in foodcrops in the colony increased by 25%. Four-fifths of this increase was the result of placing more land under the plough, but some of it was at the expense of plantation crops, whose area was reduced by 1 040 hectares or 10% in the same period. The brunt of this reduction was borne, within the plantation sector, by cloves, indigo and cotton, the area planted in sugar-cane and coffee remaining stationary. (102)

After the British conquest of the Cape of Good Hope in 1806, more effective Royal Navy cruises against île de France seriously handicapped that island's commerce. The net tightened with the capture of Rodriguez island, two days sailing to île de France, in May 1809, as a forward supply base for the ships on station, and with the institution of a full-scale blockade, a month later that completely isolated the colony and cut it off totally from its external markets. Commercial paralysis, the threat of famine and invasion and severe labour shortages resulting from a suspension of the slave trade, plunged the island into economic depression. In agriculture this was reflected by a decline in the total area under cultivation by 2 347 hectares or nearly 7,9%. The plantation sector, especially sensitive to the loss of markets, was reduced by 10,1% as against a fall of only 5,6% in the case of the sector growing provision crops in the period 1808 to 1810. (103)

The largest absolute decrease within the plantation sector was in the area under sugar-cultivation, on account of sugar-cane's importance as a plantation crop, but in relative terms this fall was about the same as that experienced by cotton and much less than that to which cloves was subject. In contrast the area planted in indigo and in coffee increased, in each case by 22%, from 1808 and 1810. It is difficult to account for the increase in indigo cultivation as this crop, declining in importance ever since 1797, resumed its downward course after the British conquest,

its area shrinking from 854 hectares in 1810 to 164 hectares in 1814, 107 hectares in 1825 and 35 hectares in 1827. (104)

The increase in the area under coffee cultivation is less intriguing. There had been a slow but steady expansion in coffee-cultivation in île de France since the 1790's in response to the world coffee shortage occasioned by the collapse of Antillean production, Milbert reporting that the competition of neutral traders for that commodity in 1803-1805 raised its price from 13 to 22 piastres per bale of 48,9 kgs. The demise of île Bonaparte as a coffee producer after the disastrous cyclones of 1806 and 1807 gave a further impetus to coffee cultivation in the neighbouring island. The time needed for coffee trees to reach maturity forced growers to look beyond the present unsettled conditions, while the comparatively low costs and limited labour requirements involved permitted an immediate expansion of the coffee-walks. The last-mentioned considerations may also explain the increase in indigo cultivation referred to above. The cost of cultivating indigo could not have been much more than that of growing common weeds. While market prospects were more uncertain than in the case of coffee, indigo was reputed to prepare the soil for sugar-growing and it may have been cultivated for this reason. (105)

Statistics of land utilisation for 1806-1810 show that 65 to 73% of the island's total cultivated area was occupied by foodcrops, while only 27 to 35% was devoted to the raising of plantation crops. The data have a bias towards provision crops, but even if this is taken into account, one must conclude that île de France's agriculture was still reasonably diversified. Within the plantation sector however, there had been a trend towards sugar monoculture. The war years had interrupted and partly reversed this trend, but even in 1810 sugar cane, covering 45% of the land in the plantation sector, was still by far the most important staple. The development of île de France into a monocultural sugar colony was to be resumed after 1810. The factors behind this continuing transformation are examined in Chapter 4.

Notes to Chapter 1.

- (1) Seligman, E.R.A. & Johnson, A. (eds) Encyclopaedia of the Social Sciences, The Macmillan Co., New York, 1942, vol. 12, p.148.
- (2) Ibid, p. 149.
- (3) Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit., pp. 55-56.
- (4) Lagesse, M. - Op.cit., pp. 28-29.  
'Ordres et Instructions pour le Sieur de Nyon' - Op.cit., pp. 9 -11  
This situation encouraged interloping, but this was limited to the importation of merchandise and slaves as no nearby markets existed for the smuggling of agricultural produce out of the island to prove lucrative, as was the case in the West Indies.
- (5) 'Ordres et Instructions pour le Sieur de Nyon' - Op.cit., p. 9.
- (6) Ibid.  
Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit., pp.212-219.  
The French silver livre was the official unit of account in the Mascarenes, but as its export to the archipelago from the métropole was prohibited, it did not serve as a medium of exchange. This function was fulfilled by the Spanish silver dollar, the colonial paper livre and copper currency of small value ( fanon, billon etc..)
- (7) Barnwell, P.J. Visits and Despatches (Mauritius, 1598-1948) Standard Printing Establishment, Port-Louis, 1948. pp. 143,145.  
Grant, C, Viscount de Vaux, The History of Mauritius or the Isle of France and the Neighbouring Islands; from their first Discovery to the Present Time; Composed Principally from the Papers and Memoirs of Baron Grant who resided twenty years in the island, by his son. Printed by W. Bulmer & Co., London, 1801. pp.34-35.  
Lagesse, M. - Op.cit., pp. 21,22,37,38,48,49,54.
- (8) Ibid, p.49.
- (9) Ibid, p.54
- (10) Ibid, pp.28-31.  
Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit., p.143, evidence of Missionary Ducros (1725)
- (11) 'Ordres et Instructions pour le Sieur de Nyon' - Op.cit., p.15.  
Lagesse, M. - Op.cit., pp.18-19
- (12) Ibid, pp. 31-32.
- (13) Ibid, p.92.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., p. 751

- (14) Lagesse, M. - Op. cit. , pp. 28, 91-92.
- (15) Ibid, p. 29.
- (16) Ibid, p. 46.  
cf. Introduction.
- (17) Lagesse, M. - Op. cit. , pp. 17, 55  
Grant, C - Op. cit. , pp. 242-243.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , p. 753-756.
- (18) Before 1734 the island of Bourbon was the seat of government in the Mascarenes. In that year île de France's Provincial Council was replaced by a Superior Council, thus gaining the same administrative status as Bourbon. The governor was to reside 6 months in each island, but as Labourdonnais spent most of his time in île de France, that colony became the defacto administrative centre of the archipelago.
- (19) Hollingworth, D. They Came to Mauritius : Portraits of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, Oxford University Press, London, 1965, pp. 8-9.  
Lagesse, M. - Op. cit. , pp. 23, 74. cf also Document 12 in Ibid. , pp 96-97
- (20) cf. Chapter 2.  
Alpers, E. A. - Op. cit. , p. 90.
- (21) Ibid, p. 89
- (22) Rouillard, G. 'Histoire des Domaines Sucriers de l'île Maurice', I, Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice, vol. 43, 1 (Jan-Feb, 1964) pp. 11-12.  
North-Coombes, G.A. The Evolution of Sugar-cane Culture in Mauritius, with a Chapter on the Evolution of the Mauritian Sugar Factory, The General Printing & Stationery Co. Ltd. , Port-Louis, 1937, pp. 3 -5.
- (23) Rouillard, G. 'Histoire des Domaines Sucriers de l'île Maurice' III. Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice, vol. 45, 2 (1966) pp. 126-127.  
Comité du Bi-Centenaire - Op. cit. , pp. 17-19.  
Lagesse, M. - Op. cit. , p. 29.  
Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op. cit. , p. 41.
- (24) Comité du Bi-Centenaire - Op. cit. , pp. 18-19.
- (25) Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op. cit. , pp. 40-41.

- (26) Crépin, P. - Op.cit. pp. 351-352.  
Extract from the 'Relation (inédite) d'un Voyage aux Indes Orientales par M. de Maudave, Chevalier de St. Louis' (1757) in Comité du Bi-Centenaire - Op.cit. , p. 69.
- (27) cf. Introduction on David's Minissy estate.  
Le Duc, Saint-Elme, Op.cit. , p. 59.  
Hollingworth, D. - Op.cit. , p. 25.
- (28) Barnwell, P.J. & Toussaint, A - Op.cit. , pp. 67-69  
Letter of Céré to Cossigny, dated 16th August, 1778 Rev. Ret. Maur. vol III,6 (Nov. 1952) p. 317.
- (29) Lockhart Russel (1771-1772) in Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit. , pp. 137,162.
- (30) Toussaint, A. Port Louis . . . . - Op.cit. , p. 205.  
This is also the interpretation of Pitot, A. L'Île de France : Esquisses Historiques (1715-1810) Imprimerie Pezzani, Port-Louis, 189  
cf. also Toussaint, A. Harvest of the Sea . . . - Op.cit. , p. 19.
- (31) 'Mackintosh' (1778) in Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit. , p. 170.
- (32) Lagesse, M. - Op.cit. , p. 28. In the 1720's the shortage of merchandise in Compagnie warehouses forced the islanders to purchase their imported requirements from "officiers des vaisseaux qui à titre de port permis apportaient presque tous des paccotilles, de sorte que le peu d'argent envoyé par la Compagnie ressortait bientôt de l'île où il ne restait que le billon."  
Parry, J.H. , Trade and Dominion . . . - Op.cit. , pp. 92-96 sketches the difficulties encountered by European chartered companies in paying for commodities purchased in the East. Unfavourable trade balances meant a continuous drain of silver from Company coffers. In the 1780's and 1790's the shortage of specie remain as much a feature of Mauritian economic life as in the early part of the century. cf. for instance 'Procès-Verbaux des Assemblées Coloniales, Scéance du 1<sup>er</sup> Juin, 1790 ' Rev. Ret. Maur. vol IV,1 (Jan, 1953) pp. 40-42.  
Evidence for links between commerce and plantation agriculture can be found in Milbert, M. J. Voyage Pittoresque à l'Île de France, au Cap de Bonne-Espérance et à l'Île de Ténériffe, vol II. A. Nepveu, Libraire, Paris, 1812, p. 53 ; and in Toussaint, A. 'Le Domaine de Bénares et les Debuts du Sucre à l'Île Maurice', Annales No. 6, (1967), of the Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines, Université de Madagascar, pp. 63-67, passim.

- (33) Ordinance of the Governor-in-Council, No. 25 of 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1827. Rev. Ret. Maur. vol I, 1. (Jan. 1950) p. 42
- (34) Prior, J. Narrative of a Voyage in the Indian Seas, in the Nisus Frigate to the Cape of Good Hope, Isles of Bourbon, France and Seychelles; to Madras and the Isles of Java, St. Paul and Amsterdam during the Years 1810 and 1811. R. Phillips, London, 1812 p. 33.
- (35) D'Unienville, M.C.A.M. baron d', cited in Walter, A. The Sugar Industry of Mauritius ; A Study in Correlation. Arthur L. Humphreys, London, 1910, p. 5.
- (36) Poivre, P. cited in Grant, C - Op.cit. , p. 35.
- (37) Ibid, p. 368.
- (38) Ibid, pp. 53-4, 161, 163, 521.
- (39) Letter of Hubert to Céré, dated 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1778 Rev. Ret. Maur. vol V, 6 (Nov, 1954), p. 346.
- Joseph François Charpentier de Cossigny de Palma was born in île de France in 1736. He bought the Palma plantation in 1764. Apart from his scientific endeavours in agriculture, Cossigny is also remembered for his political role during the Revolution cf. Crépin, P. Op. cit. , pp. 350-361.
- (40) Comité du Bi-Centenaire - Op.cit. , p. 72.  
Grant, C - Op.cit. ; p. 506.  
Letter of Hubert to Céré, dated 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1778 - Op.cit. , p. 346.
- (41) Tombe, C.F. Voyage aux Indes Orientales pendant les Années 1802, 1803, 1804, 1805 et 1806. Arthur Bertrand Libraire, Paris 1811, vol. I, p. 96.  
Raynal, Abbé - Op.cit. . p. 157.  
Letter of Cossigny to Céré, dated 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 1778. Rev. Ret. Maur. Vol V, 2 (March, 1954) p. 108.
- (42) Ly Tio Fane, M. (ed) Mauritius and the Spice Trade : the Odyssey of Pierre Poivre. Esclapon Ltd, Port-Louis, 1958, pp. 10-12,13,17-18
- (43) Ibid, pp. 16-18  
Letter of Céré to Gillot , dated 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1778. Rev. Ret. Maur. vol II, 4 (Jul.1951) p. 189.
- (44) Letter of Céré to Mrs. Les Chefs, dated 5<sup>th</sup> June, 1786, in Ly Tio Fane, M. (ed) Mauritius . . . . . - Op.cit. , p. 135.
- (45) Ibid, pp. 18,19,21,135.
- (46) Letter of Céré to de Ternay, dated 22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1778. Rev. Ret. Maur. vol I, 5 (Sept. 1950) p. 243.

- (47) Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit., p. 170.
- (48) Raynal, Abbé - Op. cit., p. 157.  
Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit., II, pp. 222.240.
- (49) Letter of Cossigny to Céré, dated 4<sup>th</sup> July, 1778, Rev. Ret. Maur. vol. I, 1 (Jan, 1950), p. 10.  
Letter of Céré to Cossigny, dated 7<sup>th</sup> July,1778. Ibid, vol I, 2 (March, 1950), p. 58.  
Letter of Céré to Cossigny, dated 16<sup>th</sup> July, 1778 Ibid,vol I,3 (May, 1950), p. 120.
- (50) Letter of Cossigny to Céré, dated 11<sup>th</sup> August, 1778, Ibid, vol. III, 2 (march, 1952) p. 67.  
Letter of Cossigny to Céré dated 4<sup>th</sup> January, 1779, Ibid, vol vi, 1 (Jan, 1955)  
Various letters in Ibid. vols I, 5 (Sept, 1950) p. 312; II; 3. (May,1951) p. 129; III; 1 (Jan,1952) p. 4, III, 2 (March, 1952) p. 67.
- (51) Letter of Cossigny to Céré, dated 25<sup>th</sup> July,1778, Ibid. vol II,1 (Jan,1951) p. 1.
- (52) Various letters in Ibid, vol I, 2 (March,1950) p. 64; I, 4 (Jul. 1950) p. 182 ; II,3 (May, 1951) p. 125.
- (53) Letter of Cossigny to Céré, dated (March, 1950) p. 64  
Letter of Brunel to Céré, dated 12<sup>th</sup> July, 1778, Ibid, vol v, 3 (May, 1954) p. 168.
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- (68) Toussaint, A Le Domaine de Bénarés . . . . . - Op.cit. , pp. 55-61.  
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D'Unienville estimated a rise in immigration, from 624 in 1777-1787,  
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pp. 13, 16, 146, 164, 244-245. cf. Chapter 3 on political changes  
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Tableau 13.

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calculated from Table 1, 4.

(103) Ibid,

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In the second-mentioned book, Toussaint gives the following estimates of ships reaching île de France between 1803 and 1810. The data show clearly the effectiveness of the British Blockade from 1806 onwards.

TABLE 1, 5. French- and Foreign-Registered Ships arriving at Ile de France (1803-1810).

Year	Country Ships		Long Cours		Year	Country Ships		Long Cours	
	french	foreign	french	foreign		french	foreign	french	foreign
1803	199	39	36	25	1807	116	36	-	26
1804	143	45	3	82	1808	96	10	2	13
1805	110	39	2	89	1809	45	1	3	2
1806	59	31	-	44	1810	13	-	5	1

While most country-ships calling at Port-Louis were French-owned, the bulk of long-distance trade in the seven years after 1803 was in the hands of foreign traders (neutrals). Of these 80% were American, 10% Danish, 1,4% Portuguese and 5% from Hanburg and Lubeck.

Unfortunately Toussaint did not examine the composition of imports and exports and their final destination.

Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit., II, p. 233, Ter. states that from 1806 to 1808 the slave population fell by almost 2 000 as a result of the blockade.

(104) Table I, 4 above.

Unienville, M.C.A.M., Baron D' - Op.cit., Tableau No. 13.

(105) Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit., II, p. 237,

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Alden, D. - op.cit., p. 42 says that in the West Indies "sometimes

indigo served as the handmaiden of sugar ... It was cultivated on fresh woodlands 'to sterilise them and prepare them for sugar' . Alden is citing E. Long The History of Jamaica ... London, 1974.

## CHAPTER 2

### Slavery at Ile de France 1721-1810

#### 1. Origins of Slavery in the Mascarenes.

Slavery had long existed as an established institution in the south-western Indian Ocean region and Arab slave-trading, with its roots in the early Christian era, in the words of Reginal Coupland, "ran like a scarlet thread through all the subsequent history of East Africa until our own day." (1) However slave trading to the Mascarenes, and the system of slavery which evolved in the archipelago in the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, were essentially different.

Until the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century at least, the mainstay of long-distance trade on the east African coast was ivory rather than slaves. Superior to the brittle Indian product, African ivory found a ready market in India, where it was used in the making of ceremonial ornaments with a mass market, such as marriage bangles, or in the manufacture of 'objets d'art' for the homes of the rich. (2) The soaring demand for slaves in the Mascarenes in the last third of the eighteenth century led to an intensification of the slave trade of East Africa. In challenging the 'ancient supremacy' of ivory, the demand of French planters for slaves brought about "a unique departure from the previous character of East African involvement in the trade of the Western Indian Ocean system." (3) European slave trading led to growing political instability in East Africa. Firearms were introduced and inter-tribal warfare became endemic, as Makua slave-raiders were given the technological means and the financial motives to develop into a formidable fighting force, with the ability to challenge even the Portuguese fortified settlements on the coast. (4)

In Madagascar, society was traditionally divided into three main castes, namely, the nobility or the andriana, the freemen or hovas, and the slaves or andevos. Many of the latter, of African origin, had been introduced by Arab slave dealers from the mainland, but a number were native Malagaches who had been enslaved for debt, for various crimes, such as treason, or as the price of defeat in battle. (5) But the andevos

were not very numerous relative to the total population. Moreover Malagasy slavery had a well-defined domestic character. It could not be adapted to the needs of the Mascarenes, for it could provide neither the quantity nor the type of slaves required by the colonists. (6)

As was the case in East Africa, European slave trading in Madagascar destabilised the area. The bulk of Malagasy slaves taken to the Mascarenes consisted of prisoners of wars captured in increasingly frequent internal conflicts, waged with firearms introduced by the slave dealers, and often precipitated by the latter. One of them, Mayeur, admitted that : "nous (les traitants) n'avons cessé d'attirer le feu de la guerre entre eux (les Malgaches) dans l'idée qu'elle était un moyen sur de nous procurer un plus grand nombre d'esclaves." (7) In his Histoire de Madagascar, Hubert Deschamps chronicles several of these conflicts. He says that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the Imerinas became the largest suppliers of slaves to the Mascarenes, during the phase of territorial expansion of their kingdom under Andrianampoinimerina (1787-1810). In the long-term, firearms and slave trading boosted political unity in Imerina, bringing eventual peace to the inhabitants as the kingdom's power was consolidated. The experience of the Betsimisarakas of the west coast however, provides us with telling evidence of the largely nefarious effect of European slave trading on Malagasy history. For half a century after the death of king Ratsimilaho (1750) anarchy reigned in the area and the Betsimisarakas were turned into a nation of slave-raiders, preying primarily on their neighbours, but even as far afield as the Comoros and the East African islands of Ibo and Mafia, to secure slaves for the Mascarenean market. (8)

The prior existence of slavery and slave-trading in Madagascar and East Africa does not explain the emergence of slavery in the Mascarenes. Rather a reverse relationship can be posited, with the rise of Mascarenean slavery leading to an intensification of slave-trading in the region, with disastrous effects on political stability and the quality of life at the sources of supply.

There is no simple explanation of why slavery became established in the Mascarenes. Moreover the available evidence on the early phases of

this process is limited and somewhat ambiguous.

In a statute of 26 October, 1664, the Compagnie des Indes prohibited the enslaving of the indigenous inhabitants of the areas within its jurisdiction : "Il est exprèssement défendu de vendre aucuns habitans originaires du pays comme esclaves, ni d'en faire trafic sous peine de la vie. Et il est enjoint à tous les Français qui les loueront à leur service de les traiter humainement sans les molester, ni les outrager, à peine de punitions corporelles, s'il y échet." (9)

The settlements established at Fort Dauphin, in Madagascar, and at Mascarin, in the middle decades of the seventeenth century, did make use of indigenous labour, but even though they were assigned the most arduous tasks, the Malgaches had the status of servants. This was not only due to the prohibition of 1664, but also to the difficulty involved in coercing a numerous and powerful people to labour. As one of the handful of settlers put it : "Il'on accoutumera difficilement ces peuples au travail; pour les réduire sous le joug il faut être absolument les maîtres, et ce n'est pas une chose aisée d'y réussir à moins d'avoir des forces considérables." (10)

In 1674 the Fort Dauphin settlers were massacred by the Malgaches. From that date onwards, until at least 1721, the focus of French colonising efforts in the south-western Indian Ocean region was Bourbon. By 1689 the Malgaches labourers on that island are no longer referred to as 'nègres' but as 'esclaves' in official correspondence. Why this shift from contractual servitude to slavery? Filliot attributes it to the effect of the massacres of 1674, and of the spate of rebellions which erupted, amongst the Malgaches living in the island, in the following fifteen years, as a result of which "la cohabitation pacifique" came to an end. More significantly, he also links it to the rise of capitalist agriculture, stating that : "la mutation correspond aux premiers vrais essais de culture." (11)

When Ile de France was settled in 1721 black slavery had already become established in neighbouring Bourbon. Until 1735 however, slaves

made up only a small fraction of the total population. The Compagnie's instructions to de Nyon show that there was no intention, except in a very limited sense, to use slaves outside agriculture. The fortifications, barracks, warehouses and other public works were to be undertaken by : "des soldats ouvriers suisses avec leur sergent à leur tête et quelques nègres pour les travaux les plus rudés." (12) The settlers however were to be supplied with slaves. De Nyon was to distribute land to the former, as well as "une quantité de nègres suffisante à chacun pour le terrain qu'il occupera." (13)

In the Caribbean the labour needs of colonial agriculture were at first met by white 'engagés' or indentured servants from Europe. This was because, while some form of unfree labour was required, there was no a priori reason for this labour to be black. An 'engagé' would normally serve his colonial master for a three year term under extremely harsh conditions. This 'esclavage de trois ans' would be endured as it was a means of obtaining a free passage to the colonies. Furthermore on serving his time, the 'engagé' would be rewarded with a grant of land, access to the labour of indentured servants and the prospect of an independent existence as a small planter. So long as there was good unappropriated land, as a magnet for immigration, there was an adequate flow of white indentured servants to the Antilles. When population pressure reduced the amount of improvable land available, African slaves had to be substituted for the engagés. (14)

The Compagnie des Indes did sponsor the emigration of settlers to île de France on the condition that they would remain in its service for a term of three years. After receiving their congé ex-servants would normally be granted land. The available evidence however indicates that Compagnie servants were either skilled workmen or young women suitable for marriage. Nowhere is there mention of indentured agricultural labourers. Wherever the Compagnie paid the passages of men that were to engage in farming, it was in their capacity as independent cultivators rather than in that of bonded labourers. (15) The failure to use 'engagés' in the colonisation of île de France was perhaps due in part to the fact that the system was in decline when the island was being settled. At the same time, it was probably cheaper to obtain rural labour from nearby Madagascar than from the distant métropole. (16) Moreover,

several decades of experience with negro slavery in the Caribbean had revealed its superiority over white indentured servitude as a form of forced labour. Its supply did not depend on the availability of vacant land, and did not dwindle as population increased in the colonies. (17)

Neither in the Caribbean, nor in the Mascarenes, was any attempt made to base colonial agriculture on voluntary wage labour, in the initial stages of settlement. This was because of the abundance of land relative to population. Evsey Domar has explained the emergence of slavery or serfdom in terms of land-labour ratios. Slavery could arise if the land-labour ratio was high, says Domar, in a situation where the governing authority promotes the rise of a non-working class of agricultural landowners. This is because, if land is abundant and labour scarce, it is the ownership of workers rather than of land that will yield rent. Little surplus could be derived from the use of hired labour if labourers have freedom of movement because, in such a situation, competition between landowners for the scarce factor of production will drive the price of labour up to the value of the marginal product. This will be close to the value of the average product because of the abundance of land.

If restrictions are placed on labour mobility, either in the form of slavery or serfdom, or in the case of the Antilles in that of indentured servitude, competition amongst landowners will abate in intensity and most of the output of labour above a certain minimum level may now be appropriated by the landowners. (18)

The Domar thesis can be broadly applied to île de France in the early stages of its settlement. The Compagnie des Indes did promote the emergence of a class of landlords, as was seen in the introduction, through their policy of land concessions. The ratio of land area ( $k^2$ ) to population, as late as 1735, was a high 2,2 to 1. In such circumstances it was essential to obtain bond labour. The Compagnie policy of supplying slaves to the colonists on credit reflected this fact. (19)

It can be seen therefore that the viability of insular agriculture depended to a large extent on the availability of slave labour. Evidence for this view can be found in a declaration made by Coupet, Bastien, Pondard

and Perrot, before notary de K/Gallet on the 20 November, 1730, that they now produced sufficient foodstuffs to meet the needs of their families and slaves, and to supply a surplus to calling ships : "tant en légumes, mais que volailles". They linked their success to the supply of bond labour : " Ils n'avaient eu pendant trois ans qu'un seul esclave, ce qui causa du retard dans le progrès de leurs habitations, mais depuis seize mois qu'ils commençaient à avoir les premiers noirs de Guinée, ils se trouvaient de plus en plus à même de fournir aux vaisseaux les secours nécessaires. "(20)

Outside agriculture, military labour was found wanting and had to be replaced with slave labour. The agreement drawn up with Sieur Bugnot for the use of his Compagnie Suisse, as stated in the introduction, limited the supply of military labour at any one time to one-third of the unit's effective strength. But even soldiers nominally on duty were often reluctant to work. This was because the abundance of game in the forests and of fish in the island's calm lagoons made it very attractive to earn one's keep by hunting and fishing. Sedentary labour called for some form of coercion. The attempts of several administrators to coerce the soldiers to labour were however not successful. For example, Duval disarmed the troops under his command at Port Nord-Ouest, and sent patrols of slaves, led by woodsmen from Bourbon, in the forests to deter soldiers from hunting. He was castigated by de Nyon, in a letter dated 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1722 for the "irrégularité de votre conduite qui ne peut être que blâmable en tous ses chefs. En premier, d'avoir désarmé partie du détachement de la Compagnie Suisse de Bugnot pour en armer des noirs et faire la patrouille avec cette milice de nouvelle date dans le Camp du Port-Louis et aux environs : chose odieuse dont vous aurez bien de la peine à vous laver. " (24)

Soldiers deserted 'le Camp' as a result of Duval's actions. In February, 1733 there were more desertions because of the inadequacy of rations and since, instead of being housed in barracks, the soldiers had to pay for

private lodgings. In May 1734 ten soldiers mutinied and raised the Dutch flag : six were executed. (22)

The impracticability of coercing soldiers to labour led the administration to recruit workmen in India as early as 1729. Some of the Indian labourers were indentured servants, others were slaves. Thus on the 8<sup>th</sup> October, 1731, 38 slaves and 35 "coulis engagés pour trois ans" were sent from Pondichéry to île de France. During the 18<sup>th</sup> century the bulk of skilled man-power employed in construction, in the warehouses of the Compagnie and in the harbour, were slaves or indentured labourers from India. (23)

Napal states that the use of slave labour in île de France was a necessity springing from climatic factors. Without slaves : "le colon européen accoutumé à un tout autre climat, n'aurait jamais réussi à mettre en valeur les concessions au climat brûlant." (24) This climatic theory of black slavery is unacceptable. Whites from temperate zones were able to work in the sugar-cane fields of Cuba or Queensland with the same efficiency as West African or Kanaka labourers. Climate is only an explanation of slavery in the sense used by Montesquieu, in the Esprit des Lois, where he wrote : " Il y a des païs ou la chaleur énerve le corps et affaiblit si fort le courage que les hommes ne sont portés à un devoir pénible que par la crainte du chatiment; l'esclavage y choque donc moins la Raison. "(25)

This is not the same as stating that blacks were better labourers than whites under tropical conditions. What Montesquieu meant was that wherever working conditions are intolerable, no one will voluntarily work at arduous tasks. In île de France, only Port-Louis can be said to have a 'climat brûlant'. The rest of the island is tempered by the influence of altitude and of the prevailing winds. Thus the climatic theory of slavery, even in this second sense, must be rejected as an explanation of the establishment of that institution in the colony.

## 2. The Growth and Composition of the Slave Population.

From 1726 to 1735 the number of slaves in île de France increased from 20 to 648. That of settlers, excluding the military and employees of

the Compagnie, but including a small number of the latter with families, rose from a handful to nearly 200 in the same period. Before Labourdonnais' arrival in the colony, there were regular complaints of a shortage of slave labour. Most of the slaves taken to the Mascarenes ended up in Bourbon's coffee plantations, rather than in île de France's corn fields and vegetable plots. In addition, colonists in the latter island criticised the partiality shown in the distribution of whatever labour was available. (26) In spite of its inability to supply labour to the settlers, the Compagnie prohibited private slave-trading in the islands. This was not because it wanted to limit the growth of the slave population, but because it was unwilling to surrender any part of its trade monopoly. A very interesting document, illustrating this attitude, is the amnesty granted to the pirate Congdon, captain of Le Dragon, and to his men, on the 25<sup>th</sup> November, 1720. The amnesty granted permission to the pirates to settle in Bourbon, provided inter alia that they would not introduce more than one slave each into the colony and that "ils (the pirates) payeront à la Compagnie vingt piastres pour chacun noir à cause de sa seigneurie et du dommage que son commerce en peut souffrir". (27)

During Mahé de Labourdonnais' first six years in île de France, the number of slaves rose four fold, that of free settlers nearly two-fold. From 1735 to 1740 the island was transformed into a 'colonie à esclaves'. This is clearly shown by the rising ratio of slaves to free settlers in Table 2, 1, below.

TABLE 2, 1      Population of île de France, excluding the military and unmarried employees of the Compagnie ; 1735, 1740, 1746.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Settlers</u>	<u>Slaves</u>	<u>Ratio of Settlers to Slaves</u>
1735	190	548	1 : 3,4
1740	379	2 612	1 : 6,9
1746	551	2 533	1 : 4,5

Possibly because of the continuous warfare during the 1740's, the slave population declined slightly between 1740 and 1746, but the growing importance of île de France is reflected in an increase by almost one-half in the number of settlers. (28)

Labourdonnais encouraged slave-trading to île de France because he realised that agricultural progress would be impossible without an ample supply of slave labour. Man-power was needed if the ambitious projects which he wanted to undertake in the colony were to be completed. Moreover he may also have had a financial stake in slave-trading. (29)

Accordingly, the governor gave every encouragement to the existing slave trade with Madagascar, and pioneered regular slave-trading with Mozambique. French slavers has previously been barred from the East African coast by Portuguese royal decrees of 8<sup>th</sup> February, 1711 and 5<sup>th</sup> October, 1715. The venality of local officials, and a friendship with Nicolau Tolentino do Almeida, governor of Mozambique (1737-1740), whom he had saved from shipwreck in 1729, allowed the regulations to be circumvented and Labourdonnais was soon able to boast, that over two thousand slaves "partie Mozambique, partie Madagascar" had been imported into the colony. (30)

The introduction of manioc into île de France as a substitute for maize in the slaves' diet, referred to in Chapter 1, enabled the island to carry a much larger slave population than formerly. Maize was poorly resistant to cyclones, and could not be kept for long in granaries as it fell prey to rodents. The manioc root, by contrast, was less vulnerable and withstood storms better. Its cultivation and use spread rapidly once the initial resistance of colonists and slaves was overcome. It is understandable that the latter would have resented being fed an alien staple, which could be poisonous if incorrectly prepared. Their masters' reluctance to adopt the innovation is more difficult to account for. It was overcome by a decree compelling the growing of 46,5 m<sup>2</sup> of manioc per slave. (31)

By 1740, the social structure of île de France, as indicated by the ratio of settlers to slaves, was prima facie that of a classical plantation colony of the Caribbean type. This ratio was nearly 1 to 7 in the island, as against ratios of 1 to 5 in Saint-Domingue (1740) and

in Martinique (1751), and of 1 to 9 in Grenada (1753). But as was argued in Chapter 1 above, île de France was not transformed into a plantation colony until the last decades of the century. How then can one explain this similarity in population ratios? One reason for it is that the immigration of poor whites continued to be encouraged in the Antilles 'for security reasons', while it was not in île de France. Moreover Labourdonnais could obtain artisans and sailors in India and had no need for white immigrants, except for planters and overseers, whose immigration he encouraged exclusively. Another reason, is that the laying of the colony's infrastructure pushed the number of slaves in the island to abnormally high levels. Slaves were employed in constructing quays and warehouses, in erecting fortifications and powder mills, in building barracks and offices, in laying roads and in digging canals. Man-power was so scarce that to bring these projects to completion a compulsory slave corvée had to be levied. (32) It should not be forgotten that, even if île de France was not yet a plantation colony, the demand for praedial labour increased considerably during Labourdonnais' tenure of office, as sugar, indigo and cotton plantations were started by the governor and his associates, and as sedentary agriculture took root in the island. (33)

From the time of Labourdonnais' departure in 1746 to the arrival of the royal administrators in 1767, the slave population of île de France increased nearly sixfold, from 2 533 to 15 027. In the same period the number of white colonists rose in about the same proportion, from 551 to 3 163. Whereas, in 1746, insular society was grouped into two broad classes of freemen, and slaves, respectively; two decades later, a third social grouping was being distinguished in official documents. This was the class of 'libres', or of free people of colour, numbering nearly 600 in 1767. (34)

The ratio of freemen to slaves declined in this period from nearly 1 to 7 to 1 to 4. This ratio was more in keeping with the colony's economic structure. It reflected less frenzied activity in the creation of an infrastructure. At the same time it mirrored continuing free immigration, which was boosted during the Seven Years War, as the insular population was swollen by the arrival of metropolitan troops,

and of the crews of privateers, and of French warships. After the Treaty of Paris, soldiers and officials, who were forced to vacate Compagnie trading posts in India were withdrawn to île de France. Many of them are reported to have remained in the colony. (35)

The increase in the free non-agricultural population gave rise to a demand for foodstuffs which was partly met locally. The bulk of the island's slaves were thus probably employed in producing provision crops for the Port Louis market, which included the towns men, the garrison, Compagnie officials, and revictualling ships. Some field slaves were also engaged in the production of staple crops such as coffee, or sugar-cane, for the local, regional or metropolitan markets, but they must have been a minority. (36)

The demand for slave labour in agriculture was exaggerated by the prevailing forms of technology. No labour-saving implements were used in field work. The lack of a comprehensive road network, the shortage of carts, draught animals and beasts of burden meant that passengers and produce had to be taken to the town and harbour of Port Louis on the shoulders of men. (37)

Other slaves were employed as house servants on the estates. The slaves living in the capital comprised artisans, domestic servants and slaves performing a variety of occupations in the harbour area. They loaded and repaired ships, worked on the quays, workshops and warehouses. They met the man-power needs created by the island's rôle as the usual port-of-call for French ships engaged in Asian commerce. (38)

Thus, even in those years of relative economic stagnation, the needs of agriculture, transportation, commerce and the administration led to a significant increase in the slave population.

The removal of the cramping rule of the Compagnie des Indes in 1767 and the development of île de France into a bustling commercial centre thereafter, boosted free settlement in the island. As plantation agriculture forged ahead, a sustained and rising demand for slave labour was also created.

The growth of the insular population, both bond and free, is given in Table 2, 2, below, for the period 1767 to 1807. (39)

TABLE 2, 2. Population of Ile de France 1767 - 1807.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Whites</u>	<u>'Libres'</u>	<u>Slaves</u>	<u>Ratio of Freemen to Slaves</u>
1767	3 163	587	15 027	1 : 4,0
1777	3 434	1 173	25 154	1 : 5,5
1787	4 372	2 235	33 823	1 : 5,1
1797	6 237	3 703	49 080	1 : 4,9
1807	6 489	5 912	65 367	1 : 5,3

The above data is discontinuous as well as unreliable and it permits only a sketchy analysis of changes in the insular population in these forty years. It could be argued that any 18<sup>th</sup> century statistical survey would be defective, given the administrative machinery and the stochastic techniques available. In the present case however, there is the additional problem of deliberate distortion of the slave data by the slave-owners making the returns. The reason for this downward bias is that slave censuses were used for fiscal purposes, so that to understate one's slaveholdings was an obvious means of tax evasion. Various authors have estimated the shortfall as ranging between 4% and 25% of actual numbers. The concealment of slave wealth is said to have increased markedly after 1790. According to D'Unienville this was due, to "l'insouciance de plusieurs propriétaires, ou le désir de se soustraire aux impositions et aux corvées." (40)

From 1767 to 1787, the slave population in île de France rose by over two fold or from 15 027 to 33 832. This increase was called for by, and in turn made possible, economic progress. The free population rose less rapidly, but still significantly from 3 750 to 6 607, or by 176% during the same period.

During the next two decades, from 1787 to 1807, population growth was less rapid. The number of slaves increased from 33 832 to 65 367, or by 193%, while the number of freemen rose from 6 607 to 12 401, or by 183%. (41)

In this latter period, population growth was subject to a number of contrary influences.

In 1792, as reported in Chapter 1, a smallpox epidemic brought the colonial economy to a standstill and took a heavy toll, especially in slave lives. The effects of the 1792 epidemic were possibly more than offset by a rise in the volume of slave imports into the Mascarenes from an annual average of 4 225, in the period 1788-1790, to an annual average of nearly 5 000, in the period 1791 to 1793.(42) Filliot explains this increase in terms of the numerous manumissions since the end of 1789, and to the consequent need of replacing the emancipees with new hands; and of the lifting, in July of that year, of all restrictions on the slave trade to Madagascar, which had been made a royal monopoly in 1775. Filliot is not entirely satisfied with his own explanation because, as he puts it, " les plantations étaient paralysées par les événements révolutionnaires et que le climat n'était guère au travail".(43) This picture of insular agriculture is not entirely correct however. Instead of being paralysed by revolutionary events, it appears rather that the plantations were entering into a boom phase, sparked off by these same events, and aided by the ease of raising capital in times of inflation and cheap money. Thus the increase in the level of slave imports did not merely reflect a desire to bring back slave holdings to their original levels, to make up the shortages created by emancipation and mortality, but it mirrored also an increasing demand for labour as a result of expanding agricultural production for export.(44)

In February 1794, the Colonial Assembly of île de France abolished the slave trade.(45) Although it was widely evaded, the prohibition is said to have caused a decline in the level of slave imports and hence may have retarded the growth of the slave population.(46) On the other hand one author has argued that no attempt was made to enforce the prohibition.(47) Nevertheless, in June 1802, the Colonial Assembly revoked its ban on slave trading, ostensibly because it had retarded agricultural progress : "la suppression de la traite qui dure depuis neuf ans a considérablement diminué le nombre de nègres, et par conséquent la culture des terres, ce qui retarde la prospérité." (48)

After a brief revival between 1802 and 1806, the slave trade to the Mascarenes declined with the spreading of hostilities to the south-western Indian Ocean region. More effective Royal Navy cruises

from the Cape of Good Hope, captured in 1806, severely reduced slave supplies to île de France. The net tightened three years later with the capture of Rodriguez island and with the institution of a full scale blockade. The loss of export markets and the consequent decline in agricultural activity in the colony may also have reduced the demand for slave labour. When peace was restored, after the British conquest, governor R. T. Farquhar wrote to the Earl of Liverpool that : "there is a great deficiency of labourers in consequence of the strict blockade of these islands, which was kept up during the last few years so that unless some means be speedily devised for supplying these colonies with hands, they cannot continue in cultivation but must become deserts." (49)

Five weeks later Farquhar added that slave numbers had also been reduced by "epidemic distempers following a state bordering on famine" and called for the island to be granted an exemption from the Slave Trade Abolition Act, repeating his warning that : "without a fresh importation of slaves... these islands, as I am given to understand and have been led to believe, cannot continue in cultivation and produce but must become deserts." (50)

How did the demographic experience of île de France relate to that of contemporaneous slave societies?

The racial composition of its population placed it midway between the West Indian sugar colonies and the cotton, indigo and tobacco colonies of the American south. Blacks made up 80-83% of its total population, a proportion remaining practically stationary during the 44 years before 1810. (51) In the American south by contrast, blacks formed a minority of the total population making up about 30% of the total in 1650 and 40% in 1770. (52)

In the British Caribbean an ongoing process of racial transformation was set into motion by the collapse of the white indentured servant system, as good unappropriated land was depleted in the islands. (53) The proportion of blacks in the total population increased continuously from 25% in 1650 to 91% by 1770. (54) The process went much further in these islands where sugar became the dominant crop. Thus by 1783 the freeman to slave ratio had risen to 1 to 11 in Jamaica, 1 to 13 in Barbados and 1 to 25 in Grenada. Sugar plantations were typically large-scale undertakings,

run on capitalist lines and with an insatiable need for black labour. The small farmer was squeezed out by them and room was left only for white planters and overseers. As Eric Williams put it: "The economic triumph of sugar meant the demographic domination of the Negro." (55) Since sugar only became King in île de France in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, the smaller proportion of blacks and the constancy of the white:black ratio can be accounted for. (56)

Île de France stood closer to the Antillean experience than to that of the American south in terms of its demographic performance. In the first case, the slave population failed to reproduce and had to be sustained by continuous imports from Africa, while, in the second, the slave population increased by natural means. (57) Milbert estimated that in 1806, 27,7% of île de France's slaves had been born in the colony. In Jamaica, in 1788, the corresponding proportion was about one-third, but as many as 80% of North American blacks fell into the same category in the period 1780-1810. (58)

There is little doubt that île de France's slave population was in a state of natural decrease during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and that slave population growth was made possible only by the slave trade. However it is very difficult, if not impossible, to quantify the relative contributions of births, deaths, manumissions and slave imports to demographic change.

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, who resided in île de France as king's engineer from 1768 to 1770, estimated that the 20 000 slaves in the island at the time had to be renewed by one-eighteenth each year. He concluded, albeit inaccurately, that if slave trading ceased, the colony would destroy itself within eighteen years. (59) Travellers' reminiscences are notoriously unreliable as sources of statistical information. In view of this, Bernardin's figures should be treated with circumspection. (60) In the light of independent evidence his estimate of total slave numbers seems reasonably accurate, but his assertion, that the slave population had to be renewed by one-eighteenth each year, which is equivalent to an annual rate of natural decrease of 55<sup>0</sup>/100, is probably inflated. (61)

The only notable attempt to measure the sources of slave population growth in île de France is that of Baron M.C.A.M. D'Unienville,

who in 'Tableau 44' of his Statistique de l'île Maurice isolated the determinates of this growth for the period 1767 to 1817.

D'Unienville's findings, for the years 1769 to 1810, are summarized in Table 2, 3, below. (62)

TABLE 2, 3. Sources of Slave Population Growth 1769 - 1810

<u>Sources of Growth</u>		<u>Annual Rate of Growth</u>
Births	59 453	33,3 ‰
<u>less</u> Deaths	<u>56 493</u>	30,0 ‰
Natural increase	<u>2 960</u>	3,3 ‰
<u>plus</u> Imports	<u>56 200</u>	variable
	59 160	
<u>less</u> Enfranchisements	<u>1 340</u>	0,8 ‰
	57 820	

During this period slave numbers rose from 17 106 to 74 926, or, by 57 820. In the Statistique, the bulk of this increase was attributed to importation. It was reckoned that 56 200 slaves landed on the island's shores from 1769 to 1810, and 51 900 in the slightly shorter period from 1773 to 1810. D'Unienville arrived at these estimates from information given by : "some merchants who carried on this trade. It varied much according to circumstances". (63) The nature of the information makes the figures suspect. It seems that D'Unienville underestimated the volume of slave imports into Ile de France. Toussaint has calculated that slaves arriving in the colony from Madagascar and the East African coast alone, during the period 1773 to 1810, amounted to 62 387. Toussaint's estimate is nearly 17% greater than D'Unienville's, even though it too understates the real position, as it is based exclusively on official statistics for Port Louis, and considered neither smuggling, which is said to have been a significant source of slaves at the time, nor the importation of slaves from Asia. (64) J.M. Filliot has estimated that île de France and Bourbon jointly imported 105 000 slaves from all sources from 1769 to 1810. As île de France's servile population increased

considerably faster than that of its neighbour during most of this period, it is not unreasonable to assume that the great bulk of these imports were destined to it. A comparison of the growth of the two economies in the same period would also lead one to expect this result. (65)

It is surprising to see that the Statistique assigns a positive role to natural population change, in accounting for rising slave numbers, during the last four decades of French rule. Constant birth and death rates of 33,3 ‰ and 30,3 ‰ are assumed, respectively, which implies a rate of natural increase of 3,3 ‰ per annum. But, just as the Statistique underestimated the volume of slave imports, it overestimated the contribution of natural population change to slave population growth. D'Unienville's findings and assumptions were published after his death by an editor who altered the author's original estimates. Kuczynski believes that : " the editor was very careless, and it is doubtful whether the revised figures are more correct than the original ones. " In the manuscript version of the Statistique, drawn up in 1825, a lower birth rate of 30 ‰ and a higher death rate of 33,3 ‰, and hence a rate of natural decrease of 3,3 ‰ per annum, were assumed. (66) Whereas in the published version an emancipation rate of 0,8 ‰ was assumed, in the manuscript a much higher rate of manumissions of 2,0 ‰ per annum was posited. (67) These assumptions shifted the weight of explanation for slave population growth to the slave trade. In the manuscript, slave imports are thus higher. They are said to have totalled 61 400 from 1769 to 1810 and 56 700 between 1773 and 1810. (68) In light of the revised estimates of Toussaint and Filliot mentioned above, there is a case for assigning an even greater role to slave trading as a source of slave population increase. At the same time a lesser one must be ascribed to expansionary forces within the slave population. In other words, it is likely that the actual rate of natural decrease was greater than D'Unienville's assumed rate of 3,3 ‰ per annum. (69)

How can one explain the excessive mortality and low fertility that kept slave ranks in perpetual deficit? Declining numbers have been attributed by various writers to the ill-treatment on the part of

slave-owners, to the unbearableness of slavery or to influences independent thereof.

Eighteenth-century philosophers tended to link the failure of slave populations to maintain themselves to the first two-mentioned factors. In 1766 Jean François Marmontel wrote that if slaves found their condition too hateful and intolerable, "ils y renonceroient, ils changeroient de classe, ou cesseroient de reproduire et de perpétuer la leur." (70)

Ten years earlier, the Marquis de Mirabeau wrote that whenever slaves were ruled harshly, they ceased to multiply and their numbers declined through misery and vice. (71) Turgot blamed slave-owners for killing their slaves by working them to death, and Abbé Raynal felt that hard labour was responsible for slave women's miscarriages, and for high infant mortality amongst slaves. (72)

The first notable observer of the state of slavery in 18<sup>th</sup>-century île de France was Bernardin de Saint-Pierre. Referring specifically to that island, he commented : "qu'il n'y a point de population sans liberté et sans propriété, et que l'injustice est mauvaise ménagère." (73) Bernardin's Voyage à l'Isle de France is a catalogue of the horrors that local planters perpetrated on their slaves. The latter eked a miserable existence on the plantations where they laboured from sunrise to sunset under the discipline of the lash. Slave-owners disregarded the regulations of the Code Noir in favour of their chattels, such as those limiting chastisement or pertaining to feeding, clothing and sunday rest. The Code Noir had been promulgated in March 1685 to regulate the religious life and the material condition of slaves in the French West Indian colonies. It was extended to the Mascarenes in 1723, becoming applicable to île de France as from the 31<sup>st</sup> May, 1726. (76) Bernardin felt that the right of redress, provided in the Code Noir, was of little avail : "Si ces malheureux voulaient se plaindre, à qui se plaindraient'ils? leurs juges sont souvent leurs premiers tyrans." (77) The aged were commonly evicted from the estates and forced to seek their own sustenance. Slavery dampened the blacks natural vivacity and made them melancholic. It led women to chose abortion before motherhood. Eventually, driven by despair and unable to tolerate their fate any longer, many slaves would commit suicide, row across two hundred perilous sea leagues to Madagascar, or become

runaways in the forests. If recaptured the maroons would welcome death : "Ils croient qu'ils trouveront dans un autre monde une vie plus heureuse." (78)

Other visitors to the island had been divided on the quality of the slaves' existence. The naturalist Pierre Sonnerat, to whom Pierre Poivre was related by marriage, said that humane and understanding masters were "en très petit nombre" on the island, adding that : "les autres exercent sur leurs Nègres une tyrannie cruelle et révoltante." (79)

Milbert took the opposite view, that slaves lived contented lives, since "sous un ciel doux, leurs besoins sont peu nombreux et faciles à satisfaire ... il n'est que trop vrai qu'il existe des maîtres barbares, mais c'est le petit nombre; et les lois s'opposent à ce que les nègres soient traités trop rigoureusement." (80) Milbert arrived in île de France in March 1801, on the corvette le Géographe, as 'Directeur des Gravures de la Partie Historique' on the expedition to Terrae Australis. Forced by illness to remain behind on the island, he soon became indebted to the colonists, who supported him. In his book, he praised them for "l'hospitalité des temps antiques" that they extended to strangers. Milbert drew an idyllic picture of insular slavery, but he was forced to admit that "dans des temps de désordre les dispositions bienveillantes du Code Noir ont été un peu négligées." (81)

Surgeon Avine, also in île de France in 1801, thought that while slavery was against nature, the slave who patiently and dutifully bore his state, could lead a contented existence. He stated that : "auprès de quelques maîtres l'esclavage n'est qu'une heureuse domesticité, et j'ai connu beaucoup de noirs dont le sort est incomparablement préférable à celui de bien des blancs." (82)

In examining the contrast between the demographic experience of North American and of West Indian slaves, Fogel and Engerman argue that : "much of the explanation turns on factors that were independent of the kindness and cruelty of the masters." (83) Although it is clear that for most slaves in île de France, slavery was not 'qu'une heureuse domesticité', slave-owners were not the blood-thirsty monsters painted

by Bernardin. They were not inately more cruel or more heartless than their counterparts in North America or in the Caribbean. (84)

Low fertility can be explained in terms of the sexual disproportion in slave ranks. In Jamaica during most of the eighteenth century, males outnumbered females by 4 to 3, but as polygamy was condoned amongst chosen bondsmen, the sex ratio for the remaining slaves was 13 to 8. Fogel and Engerman conclude that : "so large a disproportion between the sexes was bound to encourage sexual activity outside the family and to reduce fertility". (85) Promiscuity favoured the spread of venereal diseases and lowered the conception rate. The lack of a stable family life induced slave women to resort to contraception, abortion and even infanticide. (86)

In Mauritius, as late as 1817, the imbalance in sex ratios was greater than it was in Jamaica in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1817 there were 14 388 male adult slaves on the island, as against 19 445 female adult slaves, or a ratio of 2,3 to 1. (87) Figures for 1817 are the earliest available but, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when slave trading was legally permissible, and even encouraged, the disproportion must have been even greater. This is because the bulk of slave imports was made up of adult males. The sexual imbalance was therefore more pronounced amongst African-born slaves than amongst the creole slaves, born in the colony. This can be illustrated in Table 2, 4 which gives a breakdown of the slave population of Palma plantation in 1832. (88)

TABLE 2, 4.

Distribution of Slaves at Palma by Sex and  
Place of Birth, 1832.

	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Ratio of Males to Females</u>
<u>African-Born Slaves</u>	97	29	3,3 : 1,0
<u>Creole Slaves</u>	71	82	1,0 : 1,15

It can be seen that males outnumbered females by more than 3 to 1 amongst the African-born slaves, while there was near sexual balance amongst Creole slaves. (89)

The introduction of venereal diseases into île de France is recorded as early as the first decade of settlement, when the Directors wrote to the Conseil Provincial : "La Compagnie a appris avec bien du chagrin les désordres qui se sont passés sur le V<sup>au</sup> le Bourbon, et le mauvais état dans lequel sont arrivées les filles qu'elle avoit fait embarquer sur ce V<sup>au</sup>..... la Compagnie vous ordonne de faire guérir, même par force, ceux ou celles qui se trouveront atteints de maux vénériens." (90)

Over a century later, Felix Bouron, a former health official of the Mauritian government, pointed out, in a doctoral thesis, submitted to the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Paris in 1836, that : " La Syphilis est une maladie très commune à Maurice". Bouron had used mercury compounds successfully in treating the disease, but he felt that an early treatment was advisable. However, especially amongst blacks, treatment was sought only when the disease was in its late stages : " ses ravages sont prompts et terribles lorsqu'elle est devenue constitutionnelle. Ses symptômes primitifs disparaissent aisément au moyen des traitemens les plus simples et les plus variées ; il en résulte que c'est presque toujours à ce dernier état qu'on a à la traiter, surtout chez les nègres." (91)

Arago, who visited Mauritius in 1818 on board the Uranie, during its voyage round the world, paid some attention during his stay to the factors affecting slave population growth. On hearing of an unusually fertile woman he commented : "I have heard of a mulatto woman who had thirteen children at seven births. This fertility is the more surprising, as libertinism with those women is not looked upon as a vice, and they give themselves up to it as if they had nothing to fear from its baneful effects." (92)

He also commented on the sexual disproportion amongst the slaves : "The consequence of this state of things is, that the small number of women on this island, being devoted, either from instinct or lasciviousness, to the pleasures of a much more considerable number of males, are scarcely ever fruitful, and always unhealthy." (93)

Arago pointed out too that abortion was common amongst female slaves, and that miscarriages were frequent. Arago thought that the notion of negresses taking "infusions of savin, and other pernicious plants ... merely that they may not transmit to their children the cruel yoke under which they themselves groan" was "false and ridiculous". Instead he attributed this behaviour to a lack of maternal instinct and to a reluctance to be tied down by having to care for infants. Arago however, overlooked the fact that slave mothers were denied the stable family life required for the rearing of children. From Arago's own testimony it appears that planters tried to compensate for this lack to some extent. He wrote : " There are on almost every estate old negro women, appointed to nurse all the children as soon as they are weaned. By this method many accidents chargeable solely to the neglect and the cruelty of the mothers are obviated." (94)

Slave mortality in île de France was affected by natural factors such as dearth, hurricanes and epidemics. In most cases the neglect shown by slave-owners towards their slaves magnified the effects of these calamities.

For most of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the slaves of île de France were menaced by dearth. In a letter to the archbishop of Paris in 1754, missionary Jean Pierre Teste explained that fast days were not faithfully observed in the island : " firstly, because viande maigres, vegetables, root-crops and green stuffs are rare; secondly, because the common folk's style of living and feeding might be considered a perpetual fast, and this is quite true of garrison soldiers, many workmen and all slaves."(95) The colony seldom managed to feed itself and was normally dependent on Bourbon, Madagascar and the Cape of Good Hope for its surplus food requirements. Famine threatened whenever harvest failures reduced locally grown supplies, or if the flow of food imports was interrupted by war. Naval divisions calling at Port-Louis in wartime placed demands upon the colony's resources that soon left it exhausted, as during the Seven Years War. (96)

In times of economic crisis, slave-owners were likely to neglect their slaves' diet. Its basis was manioc, which was less vulnerable to the devastations of hurricanes or to the deprivations of locusts and rodents than other crops. However violent storms did not leave manioc

fields unscathed. Lockhart Russel witnessed the "horrid effects of the hurricane" that struck the island in early March 1772. "Not a tree was to be seen standing", he wrote, " the gardens and plantations, whether of fruits, coffee, Indian corn, sugar or manioc (with which the negroes were fed), in short all shared the same fate, an almost total ruin, nothing was to be seen but devastation and melancholy countenances". (97) Another serious hurricane followed in April and the distress of the colony was so extreme that supplies had to be sent for at the Cape of Good Hope. (98)

Violent cyclones visited the island intermittently during the summer months causing some direct loss of life (99) but their impact on the state of the harvest had a greater bearing on slave mortality.

In its original version, the Code Noir laid down regulations governing the feeding of slaves. When the law was applied to the Mascarenes, these regulations were omitted, but article 17 of the revised code empowered the administrators to draft similar regulations, if necessary. Article 14 of an Ordinance of 1767, decreed that slave owners had to provide two pounds weight of maize per day, or its equivalent in rice, manioc, beans or sweet potatoes. Karl Noël felt that this scale of rations was inferior to that laid down in the law of 1685. According to Noël : "La législation pour esclaves depuis 1685, en particulier le Code Noir s'était détériorée.

Le Code Noir de 1685 prescrivait pour les esclaves des Antilles un régime beaucoup moins végétarien puisqu'il comprenait deux livres de boeuf salé ou trois livres de poisson, pour chaque esclave âgé de plus de dix ans." (100)

Cattle were few, and fresh meat incredibly dear. Slaves kept some goats, pigs and poultry and could supplement their diet with the produce of their provision grounds or from fishing, but their opportunities for doing so were extremely limited. Garden plots could only be attended to on Sundays or on feastsdays, and during the week slaves worked from dawn to sunset. (101) Slaves could not easily exchange the surplus of their garden plots for additional provisions, as their movements outside the plantations were severely circumscribed. Slaves, carrying produce for sale, required written permits from their masters, that were valid only on the day of issue. Such regulations were ostensibly to prevent "la maraude et le recel". However scholars of West Indian slavery have

argued that the real purpose of such laws was to prevent slaves from participating in economic life. Slaves were chattels, and, as such, were not allowed to acquire or to dispose of property, except on their masters' behalf. (102)

From the available information, it appears that slaves at île de France were poorly fed at the best of times : when circumstances were adverse, they practically starved ! The slave diet was qualitatively, as well as quantitatively, inadequate. Made up almost entirely of manioc, and other starchy foods, it was short of proteins, mineral salts, and vitamins. Dietary deficiencies gave rise directly to nutritional diseases, militated against pregnancies reaching a successful conclusion, and raised the risks of infant mortality. Indirectly, by lowering organic resistance, they facilitated the spread of epidemic diseases. (103)

Smallpox epidemics broke out in île de France in 1742, 1754, 1756 and 1758, taking a heavy toll in lives. In 1756, for instance, half the colony's slaves were said to have been carried off. The vessel Saint-Florentin introduced smallpox once again into île de France in mid-December, 1770. Deaths were notably higher in the town than in the country districts. Intendant Pierre Poivre, who had sought refuge in the countryside, refused to heed Chevalier des Roches' (1769-1772) injunctions that he should return to the capital, on the grounds that certain death awaited him there. (104)

Cholera struck in 1775, and, in 1782, there was another outbreak of smallpox as well as an infectious throat disease. A decade later the slave trader, Ollier Grand Pré, evaded quarantine rules and smuggled slaves, some of whom had smallpox, into the island under cover of darkness. (105) The episode is instructive, not only for the role it played in sparking off one of the fiercest epidemics of 18<sup>th</sup> century île de France, but also because of the light it sheds on slave smuggling.

The human cargo passed through the hands of several intermediaries, presumably to disguise its illegal origins, before being retailed to the inhabitants. Toussaint tells us : " La traite du négrier, conduite au port chez M. Merven d'abord et ensuite chez M. Etienne, dont l'établissement voisinait avec celui de Monneron, avait été vendue en gros aux Sieurs Cambenor et Picquenard, qui l'avaient à leur tour revendue au détail à divers habitants de la ville et des quartiers". The disease infected the

slaves who were kept on the neighbouring premises of Monneron, Lezongard and Cie and spread to the rest of the island causing frightful mortality. (106)

From 1793 to 1820 no serious outbreaks of smallpox were recorded. Part of the explanation for this may lie in the introduction of vaccine from India by Déglau in 1802. Vaccination was made compulsory in 1806, but many were sceptical of its merits, and the measure may well have been better observed in the breach than in the observance. (107)

Epidemics raised slave mortality to excessively high levels. The generally poor health of slaves was partly responsible for this, but their vulnerability was further compounded by the inadequacy of health care. During the 1792 epidemic, no room could be found to hospitalize sick slaves in Port Louis. A solution was found on the 18<sup>th</sup> July, when : " Le Procureur général suggèra ... de faire construire des paillotes sur l'île aux Tonneliers et d'y transporter les varioleux". Toussaint adds, with the impassivity of the chronicler, that this initiative braked the progress of the epidemic. (108)

Article 20 of the Code Noir of 1723, required that sick slaves be sustained by their owners. (109) When Milbert stayed in the Plaines Wilhems and Moka region he visited "l'hôpital des noirs" on one of the estates. He remarked that most sizeable plantations had infirmaries and received the regular visits of medical practitioners. (110) Karl Noël suggests that such practices were widespread but they are unlikely to have been followed by more than a handful of planters. Where the latter did provide hospitalisation for their sick slaves, the quality of health services was often woefully inadequate. (111)

Bouron also wrote that abdominal diseases such as dysentery and ascites were encountered frequently amongst the slaves. He stated that dysentery took a greater toll on the estates where slaves were poorly nourished : "les hommes qui se livrent aux travaux rudes de la campagne, qui sont constamment exposés aux influences atmosphériques, ont besoin d'une alimentation qui résiste long-temps à l'action de l'estomac : une nourriture légère, presque liquide, les dispose, il nous semble, à contracter des maladies des organes digestifs." (112)

Standards of clothing and shelter were also very poor. On arriving in the island for the first time, travellers were often shocked to see that slaves were half-naked. De Castro says that nakedness can be an advantage in a cold and humid climate, as it minimises body loss of sodium chloride through excessive sweating, since "clothed skin secretes sweat almost twice as rich in salt as does naked skin." On the other hand, scanty clothing can be a health hazard in cold and wet conditions. As the latter set of conditions was also encountered in Île de France, scantily clad slaves were often prone to chest diseases. (113) Bouron argued that the weak constitution of the slave made treatment of diseases, such as pneumonia, very difficult : "Le traitement antiphlogistique est le seul qui nous ait procuré quelques succès; mais il demande à être approprié au climat et au tempérament des individus; rarement chez les nègres peut on l'employer comme les auteurs le prescrivent. Les saignées trop copieuses font éprouver des pertes irréparables; ou jettent dans un état de faiblesse fâcheux et difficile à combattre. Les petites saignées qui ne sont pas proportionnées à la violence du mal et aux forces des malades donnent une grande activité à l'inflammation, produisent l'hépatisation du poumon, et à celle-ci succède bientôt la fonte purulente." (114)

It is very unlikely that slave-owners in the American South showed less neglect towards their slaves than their counterparts in the Mascarenes. Fogel and Engerman have however argued that the diet of American slaves was both quantitatively and qualitatively adequate. Moreover American slaves lived in the temperate zone, where the 'epidemiological environment' was less severe than in the tropical zone. (115)

Although slave-owners in the Mascarenes were, like their slaves, confronted by a host of virulent tropical diseases, better standards of diet, shelter and health care gave them greater organic resistance. Most observers point out, that during epidemics, deaths occurred more frequently amongst blacks than amongst whites. This is also suggested by the lower mortality and higher fertility rates recorded amongst this latter group. The earliest statistics available, for the period 1804 to 1816, show a white birth rate of 31<sup>0</sup>/100, a death rate of 19<sup>0</sup>/100, and hence a rate of natural increase

of 12<sup>0</sup>/oo per annum as opposed to a rate of natural decrease of 3,3<sup>0</sup>/oo or more for the slave population. (116)

In his letter LXVII from Isle of France, Arago wrote that : "The blacks scarcely ever attain so advanced an age as the whites ... There are, nevertheless, very aged blacks, especially in the caste of Indians; which is attributed to the circumstances of their being, in general, reserved for domestic service, because they are handsomer than the other slaves."

This statement reinforces the view that high mortality especially amongst field slaves was due to a poor diet, and to the neglect of slave-owners, since house-servants, with a longer lifespan than praedial ones, in all likelihood received better treatment and a more adequate diet. (117)

What was the ethnic composition and the occupational structure of slave society in île de France?

Situated in the Indian Ocean, the Mascarenes imported slaves from the Orient as well as from the African continent. J.M. Filliot estimated that, of the 160 000 slaves that were imported into the islands until 1810, forty-five per cent came from Madagascar, forty per cent from the East African coast, thirteen per cent from India and two percent from West Africa. (118) While Malgaches slaves predominated in île de France before 1760, a shift in the pattern of imports in favour of East Africa subsequently increased the African share of the slave population. In his book, Milbert gave an ethnic breakdown of the slave population of the island for the year 1806, which is abstracted in Table 2, 5, below. (119)

TABLE 2, 5. Ethnic Composition of île de France's Slave Population drawn from the census for the year 1806.

<u>District</u>	<u>East Africans</u>	<u>Creoles</u>	<u>Malgaches</u>	<u>Indians</u>	<u>Total</u>
Port-Napoleon (Port-Louis)	5 235	2 093	2 521	2 013	11 862
Country Districts	21 435	14 691	8 509	4 149	48 784
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>26 670</b>	<b>16 784</b>	<b>11 030</b>	<b>6 162</b>	<b>60 646</b>

In 1806, East Africans had become by far the largest section. They accounted for forty-four per cent of all slaves in the island. Next in importance came the locally-born or creole slaves, who made up nearly twenty-eight per cent of the total. Eighteen per cent were Malgaches, and ten per cent, Indians. No West African slaves feature in the table. This is not surprising as regular imports from that region stopped in 1750. Prior to that, slaves had been purchased in Gorée and the Bight of Benin, by virtue of the amalgamation of the Compagnie des Indes in 1719, and under the influence of Labourdonnais. Milbert wrote at length about the hundreds of 'Yolofs' (Wolofs) owned by the administration at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but he must have been referring to their locally-born descendants. (120)

Detailed statistics of slave employment are not readily available but Table 2,5, can be used as a starting point for discussing the slave occupational structure. It indicates that urban slaves, engaged in predominantly non-*praedial* occupations, made up twenty per cent of the total, while the remainder worked in the country districts, though not only in agriculture.

Planter preferences, reflecting popular myths, determined that Indian slaves made up a larger proportion of the urban class than warranted their weight in the total population. This was also true of the Malgaches, but to a lesser extent. East African representation in the town was in line with their overall numerical superiority, but creole slaves were under-represented in the urban group. (Fig. 2,1 - Page 105, below). (121)

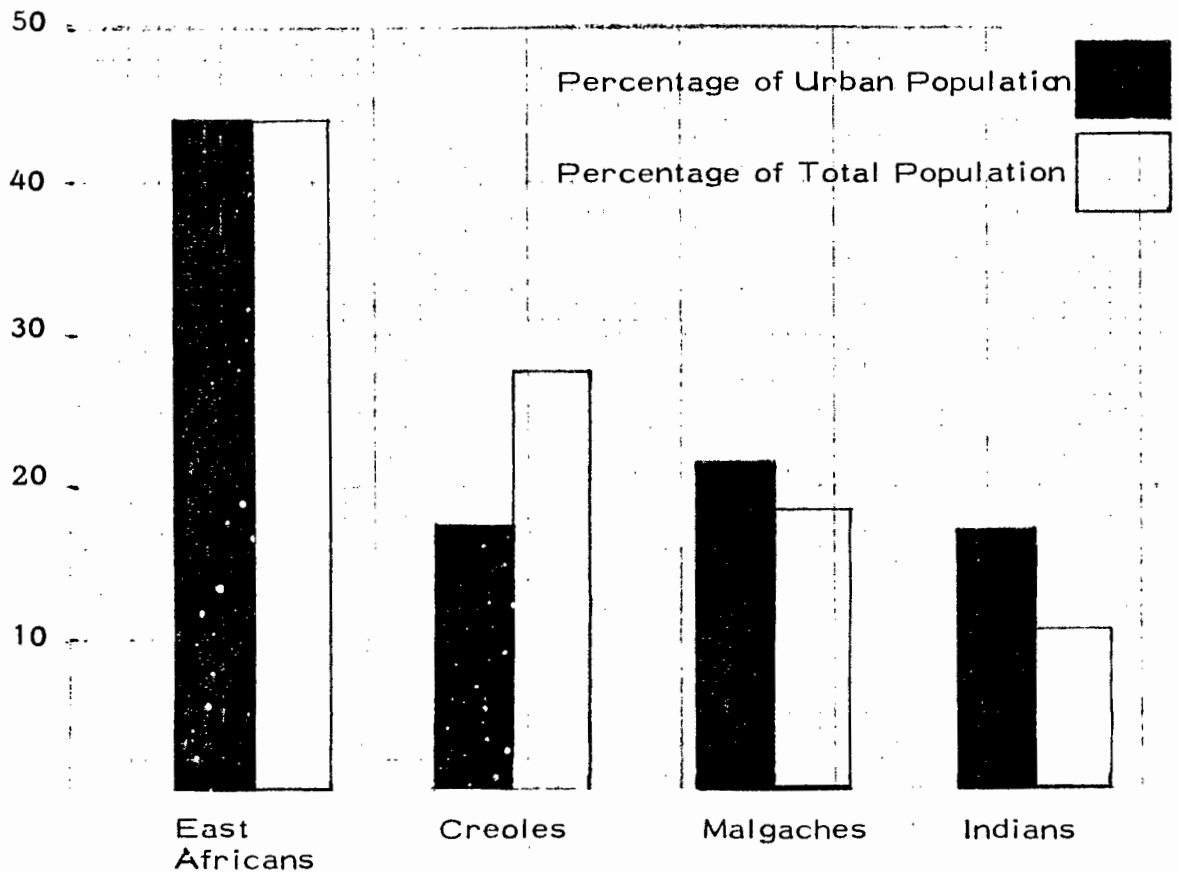
The position of slaves in the occupational structure can be said to have depended, in a broad sense, as much on ethnic considerations and on planter-held stereotypes as, one imagines, on aptitude or proven ability.

How were the various slave ethnic groups typified in planter mythology? Both Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Milbert wrote at some length on the ethnic composition of *île de France's* population and on the characteristics of the component groups. Milbert seems to have adopted some of Bernardin's observations as his own, as there are remarkable similarities of style and content between the two texts; but his account is more complete. It is also a monument to colonial prejudice, as can be gathered from the following passage, which also reveals the author's

anglophobia : "le brave et vigoureux Yolof, le doux Mozambique, le Caffre robuste et nerveux . . . . Le Chinois souple, adroit et fripon; le Malais traître, vindicatif et cruel . . . . les habitants de la presqu'île de l'Inde, race d'hommes douce et timide dont le sort semble être de tomber d'une tyrannie sous une autre, tantôt par leurs chefs, tantôt par les agents despotiques d'une société de marchands". (122)

FIGURE 2, 1.

Comparison of Ethnic Composition of Urban Slave Population  
with that of the Total Population in 1806.



Indians were imported from Goa, Pondichéry and Chandernagor and they were classified according to their port of embarkation. Those stemming from Chandernagor were known as Bengali, those from Goa, as Malabares, but this term was also applied to south Indians from the Coromandel coast who had sailed from Pondichéry. Talingas had probably also come from Pondichéry. (123)

These slaves held a favoured position in the occupational hierarchy. They most closely resembled Europeans and were employed as domestics or house slaves. Milbert says : "Ces esclaves sont les plus beaux et les mieux faits. Leur physionomie est régulière, leur couleur est olivâtre, et ils ont l'air extrêmement doux; leurs cheveux sont lisses, très longs et d'un beau noir. On préfère les Indiens comme domestiques, parcequ'ils sont plus propres et plus dociles que les autres races d'esclaves". Indians also made skilful workmen but their inferior physique ruled them out as field hands, it was believed. (124)

In 1769 Bernardin de Saint-Pierre found that the Malgaches formed the bulk of the agricultural labour force, but he remarked that many had been accomplished craftsmen in their country of origin. Three decades later the Malgaches were employed as house slaves and in workshops. They learned all types of trades with ease and were reputed to be more intelligent than bondsmen from Mozambique. There were a number of free Malgaches on the island, in the service of local merchants engaged in the traffic in slaves, rice and cattle with the 'Great Island'. Milbert calls them 'marmites', an adulteration of the Malagasy term maromita or bearer, and says that they were employed as valets or "hommes de confiance". (125) Indian freemen also lived in large numbers in the capital in a north-eastern suburb known as the 'Camp des Malabars'. Normally indentured for three years to their masters, they worked as messengers or "pions", as clerks in the offices of the administration or in trading houses, or as artisans, in the harbour, and in the building industry. (126)

In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, East Africans had replaced the Malagasy in agriculture. They had sailed to île de France from Moçambique, the Kerimba islands, the Comores, Kilwa and Zanzibar, and their numbers included Makonde, Makua and Malau, (presumably Maravi). The lowest rungs of the occupational ladder were occupied by them, not least because of popular

beliefs that they were lazy and lacked intelligence. On the other hand they were physically robust, may have had some knowledge of agriculture, and thus proved efficient field labourers. (127)

Figure 2, 1, shows a surprisingly small number of creole slaves in Port-Louis, but we know that they were at the top of the occupational pyramid. James Prior remarked that slaves, with knowledge of the "mechanic arts", were usually locally born, and were valued at double the price of newly imported slaves, or more. Creole slaves, who were reputed to "possess far more intelligence and address than the 'Caffres' and 'Malgaches', were employed as house servants, and also occupied supervisory positions, such as that of 'commandeurs'." (129)

From other descriptions of the island's slaves, the stereotypes, projected in Milbert's account, seem to have been widely held. (130) As late as 1838, 'a Bengal Civilian', on a visit to Mauritius remarked : "I have given the creole "noir" the preference over the "Africains" and "Malgaches". The "Africains", who possess a more vigorous conformation than the two other branches of the sable family, are best adapted for, and almost universally employed in agricultural labours ... (They are as) low in the scale of humanity as are the aborigines of New Holland ... The "Malgaches", in inferior to the creoles in intelligence are apter and more ingenious than the "Africains"..... amongst this class are to be found the best island mechanics, carpenters, blacksmiths, &c." (131)

Such accounts indicate that, to a large extent, the slaves' position in the occupational hierarchy was determined by ascribed factors, namely, racial characteristics and place of birth. The second factor was a greater handicap to movement up the occupational ladder than the first, since this movement was denied to most foreign-born slaves for life. On the other hand, locally-born slaves were not prevented by their race from attaining higher positions and status. Indeed, upward occupational mobility was linked chiefly to successful integration into plantation society. This involved the jettisoning of African or Malgaches values and customs, the learning of a new language, the créole patois, and of new modes of thought and behaviour. Yet it did not consist in discarding

the old in favour of the new, but rather in fusing the old and the new. This was the process of creolization. Creole society, as one author points out, "was an alloy . . . a product of acculturation rather than the assimilation of the weaker by the stronger". (132)

Notes to Chapter 2.

- (1) cited in Alpers, E.A. Ivory and Slaves in East Central Africa : changing patterns of International Trade to the latter nineteenth century. Heineman, London, 1975, pp. 94-95.
- (2) Ibid, pp. 86-87.
- (3) Cited in Alpers, E.A. "The French Slave Trade....."-Op.cit. , p. 123 cf. also pp. 83, 98, 99.
- (4) Alpers, E.A. Ivory and Slaves .....-Op.cit. , pp. 97-98, 104 et seq.
- (5) Heseltine, N. - Op.cit. , pp 9-10.
- (6) Valette, J. 'Considerations sur les Exportations d'Esclaves Malgaches vers les Mascareignes au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècle'. Communications du Congrès d'Histoire Maritime de Beyrouth, 1966.
- (7) cited in Valette, J. - Op.cit. , p. 537.  
Mayeur felt that the policy had not yet been very successful, as only a small proportion of prisoners were actually sold into slavery, while the rest were liberated; and as warfare was inimical to commerce. However, this was not always the case, and slave traders could move on to richer hunting grounds, as in the 1770's, when they shifted their interests from Madagascar to East Africa.
- (8) Deschamps, H. - Op.cit. , pp. 76-78, 105-108, 121-127. After 1680 many pirates, including the notorious Avery and Captain Kidd, settled in Madagascar, integrating with the local population; their offspring, known as the Zama-Malata, formed the ruling-class of the Betsimisarakas and provided the leadership in the daring raids on the Comoros which involved fleets of up to 500 dug-out canoes, carrying as many as 18 000 warriors.
- (9) cited in Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit. , p. 28.
- (10) Ibid. p. 29.
- (11) Ibid, pp. 31-32.
- (12) 'Ordres et Instructions pour le Sieur de Nyon'-Op.cit. , p. 8.
- (13) Ibid, p. 9.
- (14) Gaston-Martin - Op.cit. , pp. 6-7, 101.  
Williams, E. - Op.cit. , pp. 96-97, 102-103  
Davis, R. The Rise of the Atlantic Economies, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1973, pp. 131-133.

- (15) cf. contract between the Compagnie des Indes and Marguerite Noury, dated 22 October, 1728, in Lagesse, M. - Op. cit. , pp. 87-88.  
The contract with Marguerite Noury was open-ended as she was required to remain in the colony "jusqu'à ce qu'elle y soit établie".  
cf. Contract between the Compagnie des Indes and Nicolas Gouron, dated 22 October, 1728, in Ibid pp. 87-88.  
cf Letter of Compagnie des Indes to Provincial Council of île de France, dated 24<sup>th</sup> September, 1729, in Ibid, p. 93.
- (16) No sources of cheap labour were available in the vicinity of the West Indian colonies. Hence the settlers were forced to obtain their labour from as far afield as Europe or West Africa. This was so only after the indigenous Caribs had been decimated by drink, disease and forced labour.
- (17) Williams, E. Capitalism and Slavery, Andre Deutsch, London, 1944, pp. 18-19.
- (18) Domar, E. 'The Causes of Slavery or Serfdom : A Hypothesis'. The Journal of Economic History XXX, I (March, 1970) pp. 18-20.
- (19) cf. Introduction.
- (20) 'Inventaire des Registres Paroissiaux de l'Île de France' (Compagnie des Indes 1722-1767) Rev. Ret. Maur. vol II, 4. (Jul. 1951) p. 244, n.
- (21) cf. Chapter 1.  
Lagesse, M. -Op. cit. , p. 20.
- (22) Ibid, p. 53.
- (23) Napal, D. Les Indiens... - Op. cit. , pp. 9-12.
- (24) Ibid, pp. 13-14.
- (25) Williams, E. Capitalism... - Op. cit. , pp. 20-23. cf. also Chapter 3. Montesquieu cited in Seeber, E.D. Anti-Slavery Opinion in France during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century. The John Hopkins Press, Baltimore, Maryland, 1937, p. 32.
- (26) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , pp. 751, 755.  
Lagesse, M. - Op. cit. , pp. 36, 37, 47.
- (27) cf. Introduction.  
'Amnistie Accordée au Forban Congdon, Capitaine du Dragon, et à ses hommes - 25 Novembre 1720'. Rev. Ret. Maur., vol I, 3 (May, 1950) pp. 146-148,
- (28) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , p. 755.

- (29) cf. Introduction, Chapter 1.
- (30) Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit. , p. 58.  
Alpers, E.A. 'The French Slave Trade....' - Op.cit. , pp. 86,88,90,91
- (31) Comité du Bi-Centenaire - Op.cit. , pp. 19-20.  
Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit. , p. 38.
- (32) Gaston-Martin. - Op.cit. , p. 103.  
Le Duc, Saint-Elme, - Op.cit. , pp. 38-40.  
Williams, E. From Columbus to Castro.... - Op.cit. , pp. 105-106.
- (33) cf. Chapter 1 on developments in insular agriculture during this period.
- (34) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , pp. 756-758.
- (35) Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 'Voyage à l'Île de France' in Paul et Virginie - Op.cit. , p. 45.  
cf. also Introduction.
- (36) Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit. , p. 60.  
cf. also Chapter 1 above.
- (37) cf. Milbert, J.M. - Op.cit. , I, pp. 284-285.  
Bernardin de Saint-Pierre 'Voyage à l'Île de France' in Paul et Virginie  
Op.cit. , p. 49.  
Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit. , pp. 127-128.
- (38) cf. Journal of Neptune (1767) on use of slaves in harbour area.  
'Extracts from logs of Ships visiting Mauritius' Rev. Ret. Maur. vol V,2  
(March, 1954) pp. 87-89.  
cf. Godeheu - Op.cit. , Rev. Ret. Maur. vol 1, 3, (May, 1953) p. 147 on  
slaves employed in erecting fortifications.
- (39) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , p. 758.
- (40) Ibid, pp. 711-712.
- (41) cf. Table 2,2, above.
- (42) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , pp. 758-759.  
Slave import levels were estimated from Filliot, J.M. -Op.cit. , 'Graphique  
du nombre des Esclaves importés aux îles de France et de Bourbon de  
1669 à 1816!', pp. 54,55,
- (43) Ibid, p. 64.
- (44) cf. Chapter 1, above.
- (45) cf. Chapter 3, (ii), below.
- (46) Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit. , p. 67
- (47) Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit. , p. 305.

- (48) Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit., p. 67.
- (49) Toussaint, A. Port-Louis.... - Op.cit., pp. 223-225.  
Toussaint, A. La Route des Iles .... - Op.cit., p. 173 on effects of blockade on trade.  
Farquhar, cited in Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., p. 790.
- (50) Ibid.
- (51) cf. Table 2,2, above
- (52) Fogel, R.W. Engerman, S.L. - Op.cit., p. 22.  
The abundance of cheap land on the western frontier and the temperate climate were magnets to white settlement. Plantations did not dominate the southern landscape to the same degree as they towered above the sugar islands, and southern towns offered opportunities for white landless that were lacking in the Caribbean.
- (53) Davis, R. - Op.cit., pp. 131-4.
- (54) Fogel, R.W., Engerman, S.L. - Op.cit., p. 22. In the French Caribbean the process of ethnic transformation was slower. In 1770 Saint-Domingue, Guadeloupe and Martinique had a freeman to slave ratio of 1 : 7,7 or a slave percentage of the total population of 88,5 %.  
(Williams, E. From Columbus to Castro .... - Op.cit., pp. 105-106.)
- (55) Williams, E. From Columbus to Castro .... - Op.cit., pp 104-5,110.
- (56) cf. Chapter 1.
- (57) Engerman, S.L. 'Some Economic and Demographic Comparisons of Slavery in the United States and the British West Indies' Economic History Review vol XXIX, 2 ( May, 1976) p. 267.
- (58) Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit., II, Table I, p. 233 bis.  
Fogel, R.W., Engerman, S.L. - Op.cit. p. 23.  
Craton, M. Sinews of Empire : A Short History of British Slavery, Temple Smith, London, 1974, p. 19.
- (59) Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 'Voyage à l'île de France' in Paul et Virginie Op.cit., p. 59. Bernardin's statement that the colony would be extinct in eighteen years in the absence of slave imports is incorrect. At a rate of decrease of one-eighteenth or 5,5% per annum, the slave population would still be 7 500 strong at the end of eighteen years. Only if an implausibly higher rate of 37,7%, or of nearly three-eighths per annum, was postulated would the above time-scale eventuate. Putting it another way, it would take more than 175 years for the slave population to fall from 20 000 to zero at a rate of natural decrease of 5,5% per annum.

- (60) Bernardin's observations of nature are notable for their careful accuracy, but the same kind of scholarly preciseness is not as apparent in his observation of society, presumably because he was inordinately sensitive. cf. Hollingworth, D. - Op. cit. , pp. 28-31; Harvey, Sir P. , Heseltine, J.E. The Oxford Companion to French Literature, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1959, p. 64.
- (61) Fogel, R.W. & Engerman, S.L. - state that "the rate of natural decrease in the West Indies varied from 5 to 2 per cent per annum during most of the eighteenth century". (p. 25) Wilberforce reported that "the most competent authorities" set the rate of natural decrease in the British West Indies, before the abolition of the slave trade, at 2,25 % per annum. (Holland Rose, M. et al (eds) - Op. cit. , p. 314) In view of the above, and since the demographic structure of the West Indies in the 18<sup>th</sup> century suggests a higher rate of natural decrease than at Île de France , it is almost certain that Bernardin's estimate was too high.
- (62) D'Unienville, M.C.A.M. , baron Statistique de l'île Maurice et de ses Dépendances, suivie d'une Note Historique sur cette Colonie et d'un Essai sur l'île de Madagascar, 3<sup>rd</sup>ed Gustave Barba, Paris, 1838.
- (63) Ibid, vol III, Tableau 44.
- (64) Toussaint, A. La Route des îles . . . - Op. cit. , pp. 449-454. Toussaint arrives at this figure by extrapolating from 421 known slave cargoes, for 108 unknown cargoes. In this way he obtains an estimate for the 529 ships that are known to have landed slaves at Port Louis during this period. Losses en route for the 529 shiploads of slaves are calculated from 91 known cases. cf. Filliot, J.M. -Op. cit. , p. 48.
- (65) Ibid 'Graphique du Nombre des Esclaves importés aux Iles de France et de Bourbon de 1669 à 1816'. pp. 54,55.

Growth of Slave Population of Bourbon and île de France during the 18th and early 19th centuries.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Bourbon</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>île de France</u>
1735	7 573	1735	648
1779	30 209	1777	25 154
1797	44 800	1797	49 080
1810	50 588	1807	65 367

Source : Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , p. 758; Toussaint, A. Histoire des îles Mascareignes Editions Berger Levrault, Paris, 1974, p. 336

- (66) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , p. 759.
- (67) Ibid.
- (68) Ibid.
- (69) D'Unienville's assumption of constant birth and death rates over the whole period 1767 to 1817 was unrealistic. Moreover values assigned to birth and death rates were chosen quite arbitrarily, since the registration of slave births and deaths was practically non-existent before 1826, so that D'Unienville had no evidence on which to base his calculations. cf. Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , p. 841.
- (70) Cited in Seeber, E.D. - Op.cit. , p. 97 from the novel Bélissaire, which consists of a dialogue between Belisarius and Emperor Justinian and his son on various social arrangements.  
cf. Harvey, Sir P. & Heseltine, J.E. - Op.cit. , p. 95.
- (71) Cited in Seeber, E.D. - Op.cit. , p. 95.
- (72) Ibid. pp. 79. 101.
- (73) Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 'Voyage à l'Île de France' in Oeuvres Choisies - Op.cit. , p. 216.
- (74) Please ignore this number. It does not correspond to a passage in the text.
- (75) Please ignore this number. It does not correspond to a passage in the text.
- (76) Williams, E. From Columbus to Castro . . . . - Op.cit. , p. 183.  
Lagesse, M. - Op.cit. , p. 25.  
Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 'Voyage à l'Île de France' in Oeuvres Choisies . . . - Op.cit. , pp. 212,216.
- (77) Ibid, p. 216.
- (78) Ibid, pp. 212-214.
- (79) Sonnerat, P. Voyage aux Indes Orientales et à la Chine, fait par Ordre du Roi, depuis 1774 jusqu'en 1781. A. Paris, MDCCLXXXII  
l'Auteur, Froullé, Nyon, Barrois,II, p. 82.  
Ly Tio Fane, M. (ed) Mauritius . . . . . - Op.cit. , p. 13.
- (80) Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit. , II, p. 271.
- (81) Ibid, I, vii,viii,xii, 1, 116, 118, 273, 279.
- (82) Decary, R. (ed) Les Voyages du Chirurgien Arine à l'Île de France et dans la Mer des Indes au Début du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle, G. Durassié et Cie, Editeurs, Paris, 1961, p. 18.
- (83) Fogel, R.W. & Engerman, S.L. - Op.cit. , p. 18.

- (84) Karl Noël, who studied Mauritian slavery at some length felt that inhuman slave-owners were rare in Mauritius. cf. Noël, K. 'La Condition Matérielle des Esclaves à l'Île de France. Période Française (1715-1810)' Revue d'Histoire des Colonies, vol. XLI, 3 & 4 (1954) p. 308. In 1953 Noël submitted a doctoral thesis entitled 'L'Esclavage à l'Île de France pendant l'Occupation Française (1715-1810)', on which he presumably based his article.
- (85) Fogel, R.W. & Engerman, S.L. - Op.cit., p. 156.
- (86) Craton, M. - Op.cit., p. 196.
- (87) Unienville, M.C.A.M., baron d' - Op.cit., III, pp. 345 et seq, Tableau 19.
- (88) Wiehe, P.O. 'Nos Vieux Moulins' La Revue Agricole de l'Île Maurice, vol. xxii, 6. (Nov. -Dec. 1943) pp. 262-263.
- (89) cf. Chapter 5 below on the wider significance of this sexual imbalance.
- (90) Lagesse, M. - Op.cit., pp. 89, 92.
- (91) Bouron, P.F. Considérations Pratiques sur Quelques Maladies de l'Île Maurice; Thèse présentée et soutenue à la Faculté de Médecine de Paris, le 2 Avril, 1836. pp. 27-32.
- (92) Arago, J.E.V. Narrative of a Voyage round the World in the Uranie and Physicienne Corvettes, Commanded by, Captain Freycinet, during the Years, 1817, 1818, 1819 and 1820. Truffel and Wurtz, London, 1823. pp. 134-135.
- (93) Ibid., p. 141.
- (94) Ibid. pp. 141-143. Eugène Bernard, as late as 1834, criticised the prevalence of contraception and abortion, especially amongst the Malgaches slaves. cf. Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., p. 869.
- (95) Cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit., p. 155.
- (96) Ibid, p. 170.  
Grant, C. - Op.cit., pp. 193-194.  
Crépin, P. - Op.cit., pp. 351-352.
- (97) On the importance of manioc in the slave's diet cf. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre 'Voyage à l'Île de France' in Oeuvres Choiesies - Op.cit., p. 212 ; James Prior in Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit., p. 214. Decary, R. (ed) Op.cit., p. 17.  
On hurricanes and dearth cf. Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit., p. 160. citing Russel.
- (98) Ibid, p. 166.

- (99) Kuczynski wrote that hurricanes "sometimes claimed as many victims as serious epidemics". For example he stated that in 1892 a violent cyclone caused 1 232 deaths. (p. 873).
- (100) Noël, K. - Op.cit. , pp. 303; 306-307.
- (101) Ibid, p. 307, 310-311.  
cf. Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit. , pp. 166, 212.
- (102) Noël, K. - Op.cit. , p. 305.  
Williams, E. From Columbus to Castro . . . - Op.cit. , pp. 186-187.  
Davis, D.B. The Problem of Slavery in Western Culture, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1966, p. 280.
- (103) Castro, J. De Geography of Hunger, Victor Gollancz Ltd, London, 1955, pp. 74-75, 76, 78, 87, 90, 91, 99.  
cf. Bouron, P.F. - Op.cit. , p. 20.
- (104) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , p. 873.  
Le Duc, Saint-Elme, - Op.cit. , p. 80.
- (105) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , p. 873.  
Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit. , II, p. 90 mentions 'une angine épidémique' and 'un mal de gorge contagieux'.  
Toussaint, A. Port-Louis . . . . . - Op.cit. , p. 130.
- (106) Ibid, Toussaint based his account on letters which Monneron had addressed to the administration between 13<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1792, to protest against the sequestration of his slaves by the Municipality of Port Louis.
- (107) Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit. , I, pp. 90-91 says "'l'opération a réussi sur tous ceux qui ont eu la sagesse de s'y soumettre".  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , p. 784.
- (108) Toussaint, A. Port-Louis . . . . . - Op.cit. , p. 132-133.
- (109) Noël, K. - Op.cit. , pp. 311-312.
- (110) Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit. , I, p. 271.
- (111) Noël, K. - Op.cit. , p. 311.  
Because of the chronic shortage of drugs on the island, Cossigny experimented on his slaves at Palma with home-made remedies. To cure them from the 'gripe' he administered to them a plant, with purgative properties, which was regarded by Céré as highly poisonous. cf. Rev. Ret. Maur. vol III, I (Jan. , 1952) p. 3.
- (112) Bouron, P.F. - Op.cit. , p. 20.
- (113) Ibid.

- Castro, J. De - Op. cit. , pp. 81-82, referring to the research of Talberg.
- A Lady, Recollections of Seven Years Residence at the Mauritius or Isle of France, J. Cawthorn, London, 1830, pp. 126-127.
- (114) Bouron, P.F. - Op. cit. , pp. 15-16.
- (115) Fogel, R.W. & Engerman, S.L. - Op. cit. , p. 26.
- (116) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , p. 850.
- (117) Arago, J.E.V. - Op. cit. , pp. 140-141.
- (118) Filliot, J.M. - Op. cit. , pp. 54,69.
- (119) Calculated from Milbert M.J. - Op. cit. , II, Table I, p. 233 (bis).
- (120) Ibid, II, p. 163.  
Filliot, J.M. - Op. cit. , pp. 168, 184-187, 217.
- (121) Calculated from Table 2, 5.
- (122) Milbert, M.J. - Op. cit. , II, p. 195.
- (123) Ibid, II, pp. 169, 170.  
Filliot, J.M. - Op. cit. , p. 181.
- (124) Milbert, M.J. - Op. cit. , II, a passage on p. 170 suggests that sexual attraction may have played a part in establishing Indians as house slaves. cf. Arago, J.E.V. - Op. cit. , p. 141 and Filliot, J.M. - Op. cit. , pp. 175-176.
- (125) Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 'Voyage à l'Île de France', in 'Paul et Virginie' - Op. cit. , pp. 52-54.  
Milbert, M.J. - Op. cit. , II, pp. 163-168.  
Deschamps, H. - Op. cit. , p. 134.
- (126) Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, 'Voyage à l'Île de France' in 'Paul et Virginie' Op. cit. , pp. 51-52.  
Milbert, M.J. - Op. cit. , II, pp. 169-173.
- (127) Ibid, p. 162  
Decary, R. (ed) - Op. cit. , p. 17.
- (128) cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit. , p. 215.
- (129) Prentout, H. - Op. cit. , p. 125.  
A Bengal Civilian Journal of Five Months Residence in the Mauritius Samuel Smith & Co. , Calcutta, 1838, p. 13.
- (130) cf. for instance accounts of travellers J.E.V. Arago, Chirurgien Avine, & C.F. Tombe.
- (131) A Bengal Civilian - Op. cit. , pp. 15-16.
- (132) Craton, M. - Op. cit. , p. 210.

### CHAPTER 3

#### Slavery under Challenge - The Significance of the 1790's in the History of Mauritian Slavery.

##### 1. Early Critics and Reformers.

Slavery at Île de France was not seriously threatened until the 1790's. Before then however, one visitor to the island, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, and, two administrators, Pierre Poivre and Charles Louis d'Arzac de Ternay, were sharply critical of it.

Bernardin's indictment of local planters and his linking of colonial depopulation with slavery were examined above. (1) The inhabitants of Île de France would prosper and multiply if they were assured liberty and property, he said. European-born artisans were not prevented by the tropical sun from working in the colony, and this would not deter white labourers from toiling in its fields, as freemen. He continued, " mais que deviendraient les propriétaires actuels? ils deviendraient plus riches. Un habitant serait à son aise avec vingt fermiers, il est pauvre avec vingt esclaves. "(2)

'Voeux d'un Solitaire' was written in 1789, while the National Assembly was debating a new constitution for France. Bernardin supported the Revolution and had become member of his district assembly. His book reflected the spirit of reform of those days, and consisted of prescriptions for remodelling society. Perhaps because of the imminence of social change, Bernardin's visions were tempered with realism. On the other hand, he used the language of compromise and was attacked for his too moderate stance. (3)

The author's views on slavery were developed further in the chapter, 'Voeux pour la Nation'. Black slavery in the colonies should be abolished to secure liberty at home: "De peur qu'un jour il ne s'étende, par l'influence de l'opinion de quelques particuliers riches, jusque sur le peuple blanc et pauvre de la métropole. "

Bernardin envisaged a gradual process of enfranchisement, since he believed that immediate emancipation would hurt slave and planter alike. After the slave trade had been abolished, the slaves would be tied to the land, in

medieval fashion, during a period of transition. Thence they could earn their full freedom. (4)

The demands of agricultural technology in the colonial context did not make slavery a necessity in that particular setting, he added. A large labour force was undoubtedly required for sugar production but, instead of the planter cultivating and processing all the cane in his district, so as to obtain all the profits himself, a new system of production, based on division of labour, was available. The mill-owner could concentrate exclusively on sugar manufacture, while small farmers, established on subdivisions of the formerly vast plantations, would grow all the sugar-cane that was required. Bernardin added that such an arrangement would raise production to high levels, given the productivity of free agriculture as opposed to that of plantation slavery. Moreover, it would be unnecessary to refine colonial sugar in Europe, since the mill-owner would be able to devote all his attention to the processing of the final product. (5) This new regime would favour colonial industry and would offer "une multitude d'emplois et de métiers à quantité de nos pauvres paysans ouvriers, qui manquent en France de travaux; et les habitants de nos colonies se trouveraient plus riches." (6)

Pierre Poivre was born on 23 August, 1719 at Lyon. After brilliant studies, he embraced an apostolic career and, in 1740, was sent to the Far East as a lay missionary by his superiors of the Missions Etrangères in Paris. Poivre travelled widely in China and Cochinchina, visited Batavia and île de France, returning to France in 1748. (7) Having abandoned his plans of becoming a missionary, he secured an appointment as agent of the Compagnie des Indes in the East Indies and, in that capacity, spent a year in Cochinchina, where he founded a trading post at Tai To. He then visited the Philippines and the Moluccas, on two occasions, in search of spices. In 1755 Poivre returned to France, where he retired to his La Freta estate, until his appointment as administrator of île de France for the king. He knew that island intimately since he had used it as a base during his lengthy stay in the Orient. (8)

A decade after his return, Pierre Poivre delivered two lectures at the 'Société Royale d'Agriculture' in the town of his birth. In 1766 he

read his 'Observations sur les Mœurs et les Arts des Peuples de l'Afrique, de l'Asie et de l'Amérique' in front of the 'Société Royale de Paris' and, two years later, his lectures were published in bookform as Voyages d'un Philosophe. (9) In this short work, Poivre examined the state of agriculture amongst the various nations that he visited, concluding that : "in every quarter of the world, the state of agriculture depends entirely on the established laws, and, consequently, on the manners, customs and prejudices from which these laws derived their origin". (10) Agriculture prospered, if liberty and property were guaranteed, but it failed, "where those rights of mankind were not firmly established. The earth which multiplies her productions with a kind of profusion under the hands of the free-born labourer, seems to shrink into barrenness under the sweat of the slave". (11) Poivre's most telling illustration of this, was his account of sugar cultivation and production in Cochinchina. He pointed out that free-grown Cochinchinese sugar was far cheaper than that from the slave colonies, and added, that he was certain, that "our West Indian colonies had they been distributed without observation amongst a free people, would have produced double the quantity that is now procured from the labour of the unfortunate negroes". (12)

On his arrival at Île de France, in July 1767, Poivre told the colonists that he disapproved of the existence of slavery in their island : "Nous ignorons sur quels principes l'ancienne direction de la Compagnie à pu se déterminer, contre la nature des choses, à recourir aux bras des esclaves pour mettre cette île en valeur", he said. "Quoiqu'il en soit le mal est fait", he added, urging slave-owners to give their wards religious instruction, that they might at least have freedom of the soul. (13) There are some indications that Poivre was concerned about the slaves' welfare, but his attempts at amelioration were half-hearted. His ordinance of 10 April, 1771, limiting the weights that slaves could carry to sixty pounds, in the case of males, and to fifty, in that of females, was directed at the widespread abuse of forcing slaves to transport loads twice as heavy. (14) On the other hand, Poivre's regulations of 1767, on the feeding and clothing of slaves, were thought to be inferior to those of Colbert's Code Noir of 1685. Moreover, as was mentioned in the introduction, Poivre was suspected of trafficking in slaves on his own account. (15)

While Poivre was still in île de France, governor de Ternay arrived in the colony. An exemplary administrator, Ternay was opposed to the use of black slaves in the Mascarenes. Like Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, he doubted that whites would be prevented by the climate from tilling the soil. (16) He wrote to the Minister of Marine and Colonies to suggest that some twenty Acadian or German families could be sent to the island as farmers "afin de diminuer le nombre de noirs". Land was available in the sparsely populated Savanne district, and at the 'Cap'. The Minister replied, in August 1775, that settlers from Bourbon would be preferable to Germans or Acadians, but that the project would have to be shelved for the time being, as no funds were available. (17)

Nothing more came of de Ternay's scheme for the settlement of white peasant farmers in île de France but it is doubtful that success would have crowned its adoption, in view of its incompatibility with large plantations and black slavery, and, if the experience of the 'poor whites' in the Caribbean is anything to go by.

## 2. The Challenge to Slavery in the 1790's

From 1776, when de Ternay left île de France, to the end of the ancien régime, no notable attempts were made to modify or discard the prevailing mode of labour utilisation in the colony. In metropolitan France, slavery drew the critical scrutiny of philosophers, travel writers and other literary figures from the 1740's onwards. But there were no strong currents of anti-slavery thought, merely ripples in a sea of popular indifference. Even the foundation of the 'Société des Amis des Noirs' by Brissot de Warville in 1787 failed to mobilize public opinion against slavery. As Gaston-Martin put it : "La Société des Amis des Noirs de Brissot ne fut en fait avant la Révolution qu'une 'Société de Pensée', perdue parmi beaucoup d'autres. Son exotisme lui fit une clientèle. Elle n'entama aucune conviction, n'émut aucun intérêt." (18)

During the French Revolution, slavery became a problematic issue for metropolitan policy-makers. This was partly because the

'Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen', which was endorsed by the National Assembly in August 1789, had paradoxical implications for the former institution. The first article of the 'Déclaration' stated that men are born free and equal in rights. The second article, defined these natural and inalienable rights of man as liberty, property, security and the right resistance to oppression. To abolish slavery would secure the right of liberty for thousands of slaves. At the same time, emancipation would violate the property rights of colonial slave-owners.

Neither the National Assembly, nor its successor, the Constituent Assembly, which ruled France from July 1790 to October, 1791, made any attempts to resolve this dilemma. (19)

It is true that the colonial question was dwarfed by the urgency of immediate problems at home. The Ministry of the Marine and Colonies, which was weakened by a succession of Ministers "plus ou moins improvisés", failed to initiate any policy to deal with pertinent issues abroad. (20)

The 'Amis des Noirs' too failed to provide an imaginative lead on the subject of slavery. The society believed in gradual emancipation, but it did not press for it in the Assembly, after mid-1789. Instead, it agitated for less important colonial reforms, such as the extension of full political rights to the 'libres', and a progressive abolition of slave-trading. Gaston-Martin says that the 'Amis des Noirs' lacked the up-to-date information on the colonies of the planter and mercantile pressure groups in the Assembly. They were accused by these groups of being responsible for the racial strife which was gripping the Antilles : "suspectés d'être vendus aux Anglais, rendus responsables des troubles sociaux, accusés d'être les artisans systématiques de la perte de l'Empire, et de la ruine des planteurs et du commerce maritime du Royaume, les Amis des Noirs n'avaient nulle chance de rallier en 1789 une majorité parlementaire". (21)

It was then widely accepted that slavery was the basis of colonial and, ultimately, metropolitan prosperity. Unlike the British West Indian colonies, which laboured under the weight of soil exhaustion, absentee landlordism and mounting external debts, the French Antilles were booming. Thousand of hectares of virgin land in Saint-Domingue held out prospects of continued economic expansion. France, without colonies, would sink

to the rate of a third power, indebted to other countries for tropical products, it was feared. Colonial trade was seen as a nursery for seamen and France's naval strength as dependent upon its continuation. (22)

Because of the above considerations, metropolitan legislators at first left the colonial status quo largely undisturbed. But early in 1794, the abolition of slavery without compensation, was decreed with immediate effect in all French colonies.

This surprise measure, which paid no heed to colonial property interests, must be explained in terms of the execution of Louis XVI, the outbreak of war, the threat of foreign invasion and the fear of a counter-revolution at home, all of which led to a radicalisation of French political life. Control of the Convention, the country's elected assembly of 749 members, in office since September 1792, was assumed by the extremist Jacobin faction, which replaced the more moderate Girondins. Effective political power became centralised in the hands of a Committee of Public Safety, whose decisions remained only nominally subject to the sanction of its parent body. During the four months that it was led by Robespierre, the committee of Public Safety initiated a series of important reforms, imbued with the spirit of revolutionary change, which included the abolition of slavery, free compulsory education, and social security measures. (23)

The abolition of slavery was thus, in a sense, a belated application of the principles of the revolution; but in another, it was merely a response to the pressure of events in the colonies, where slavery had ceased to exist in fact, as well as in name. Saint-Domingue had been invaded by English troops in collusion with the colony's planters, and by a Spanish army, which secured the backing of many revolted slaves, whose claims to liberty it publicly recognised. To counteract Spanish propaganda and to marshal black support against the invaders, Santhonax and Polverel, the representatives of the Convention, freed all slaves in Saint-Domingue unconditionally, between August and September, 1793 (24) The planters' cooperation with the English forces, not only in Saint-Domingue, but also in Martinique and Guadeloupe, branded them as traitors, bent on preserving the ancien régime at all costs, in the eyes of the Convention. Thus the latter was willing to disregard their interests, in ratifying the freeing of

the slaves in Saint-Domingue. When a motion, for granting immediate liberty to all slaves in French colonies, without compensation, was tabled on the 16 pluviôse, An II (4<sup>th</sup> Feb. , 1794), it was voted by acclamation, drawing the support of even those who had initially favoured gradual emancipation. (25)

Before 1790, the inhabitants of île de France were excluded from the process of government, which was in the hands of a governor and an intendant, both of whom were responsible to the authorities in the métropole alone. This situation changed as a result of the revolution in France. In April 1790 an 'Assemblée Générale' of sixty-one members was convened by the colonists. Within a year it had taken the title of 'Assemblée Coloniale', had set up various organs of local government, and had adopted a constitution, which "proclamait la quasi-autohonomie de l'île". (26)

The colonial assembly was representative only of the wealthy classes. Alone 'Citoyens actifs' - persons who were 'propriétaire foncier et contribuable' - who were also thirty years of age, or more, and who had resided in the colony for at least four years, could elect its deputies. Until 1798, the assembly was controlled by planters, and townsmen with interests in agriculture, most of whom had pronounced royalist sympathies. (27)

After the execution of Louis XVI and the overthrow of the Girondins became known in the colony, political life acquired a radical tone. Thus street names with royal associations were changed and a guillotine was set up in the 'Place d'Armes' of the capital, aptly renamed 'Port de la Montagne', after the Montagnard faction in the National Convention. These moves, approved by the Colonial Assembly, which also set up a watchdog Committee of Public Safety, were merely cosmetic changes however, since this former body was still dominated by the plantocracy. (28) The real seat of Jacobin power in île de France was the 'Société Populaire des Sans-culottes', founded by Guyon in 1793. Known as the 'Chaumière', because of the building where its members met, this Jacobin club had the aim : "de travailler constamment et par tous les moyens légitimes au maintien de la liberté et de l'égalité républicaines, de se pénétrer de l'esprit des décrets de la Convention, de combattre les abus, dénoncer les

traîtres, déjouer les projets malveillants, surveiller tous les corps politiques." The Chaumière established branches in the districts, and became an important political force in the colony. The basis of its support, remarked a hostile observer, was : "une phalange de prolétaires d'ouvriers, de soldats qui avaient obtenu leur congé, et d'ambitieux adroits ou timides se tenant à l'écart et prêts à profiter des évènements." It also had the backing of the regular troops in the colony, although the latter's officers shared the royalist sentiments of the planters. (29)

In November 1794, on hearing of the fall of Robespierre, the Colonial Assembly, closed the clubs and exiled Guyon and other leading Jacobins to France, aboard the vessel Léger. Although the power of the Chaumière was broken, Jacobin feeling still remained strong amongst the 'petits blancs' in the capital, and in the ranks of île de France (107<sup>th</sup>) and Pondichéry (108<sup>th</sup>) regiments. (30)

News of the abolition of slavery by the Convention reached île de France on 21st September, 1795, when some sixty parcels addressed to the republican troops, the national guard units and to other persons sympathetic to the revolution, were intercepted by the colony's Committee of Public Safety. The packages contained copies of the decree of 16 pluviôse and letters urging loyal citizens to enforce the measure at all costs. "Nous pensons bien que les propriétaires et les riches s'y opposeront", they warned. "Eh ! bien, courez alors sur les riches et les propriétaires, comme sur les ennemis de la chose publique." The matter was kept secret by the Colonial Assembly which set up a commission with the expressed task of censoring incoming mail. Ships arriving from France were boarded by members of the Commission, who took possession of all letters in the hands of passengers and crews, before the latter were allowed to disembark at Port-Louis. (31) The island was thus insulated from the revolutionary currents flowing from the métropole, but, in any case, it is unlikely that the national guard would have heeded the Convention's call for freeing the slaves by force of arms. Its members, many of whom were planters, were recruited amongst the 'citoyens actifs' and their sons, and could be expected to uphold the interests of the propertied groups. (32) Moreover as stated above, the power of the Jacobin clubs had been broken several months before, and for the time being the republican troops and the

sans-culottes of Port-Louis remained subdued. (33)

Autonomous stirrings in the French colonies, so characteristic of the last decade of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, were viewed with disfavour by successive metropolitan governments, who sought to reestablish their authority on a firmer basis wherever possible. In Saint-Domingue, commissioners Santhonax and Polverel abolished the colonial assemblies, and ruled in quasi-dictatorial fashion, with the aid of metropolitan troops and liberated slaves. The English seized Guadeloupe in April 1794, with the collaboration of planters anxious to maintain the status quo. They were driven out within a few months by Victor Hughes who, on his arrival in the colony with a thousand men, decreed the abolition of slavery and called the *ci-devant* slaves to arms. (34)

Two years later it was the turn of *île de France*. On the 18<sup>th</sup> June, 1796 the naval squadron of counter-admiral de Sercey, new commander of the East Indian station, docked in Port-Louis. On board were two agents of the Directoire, which had replaced the Convention in October 1795, as France's government. They were Baco de la Chapelle and Etienne Laurent Pierre Burnel, the latter of whom had lived in the island from 1790 to 1795, where he had edited a political gazette, worked at the colonial bar and held senior office in local administration. (35) They had the backing of 1 200 troops for enforcing the decree of 16 pluviôse An II, and for replacing the régime existing in the colony since 1791, with a new order, embodied in the 'Constitution de l'An III (proclaimed Sept., 1795). (36) This constitution was less democratic than the one it supplanted, and it established in France 'une république bourgeoise', but its application in the Mascarenes was seen as threatening to the colonial status-quo. In terms of the decree of 8 March, 1790 French colonies had been granted a measure of local autonomy. This decree had not intended to: "les comprendre dans la Constitution décrétée pour le royaume, et les assujettir à des lois qui pourraient être incompatibles avec leurs convenances locales et particulières."

This measure laid the basis for the election of colonial assemblies and exempted the colonies from the 'dangerous' provisions of the French constitution of 1791. On the other hand, articles 6 and 7 of the Constitution of 1795, declared that : "les colonies sont parties intégrantes

de la République et sont soumises aux mêmes lois constitutionnelles."(37)

The monopoly of political power enjoyed by île de France's propertied class would hardly have been affected by the provisions of this second constitution. However the planters resolved to oppose it because it outlawed slavery. Article 15 of the revised 'Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme', stated : "Tout homme peut engager son temps, ses services, mais il ne peut se vendre, ni être vendu; sa personne n'est pas une propriété aliénable."(38)

Four days after their arrival, the agents met a delegation of nine members from the Colonial Assembly at the palais du gouvernement to discuss their plans for the colony. The night before runners had been sent in all directions to summon the inhabitants of the countryside to the capital, and, by the time of the meeting, a large crowd had gathered outside its venue. After Burnel had read out the Directoire's instructions, Baco told the delegates that it was not their intention to free the slaves without the drawing up of preliminary measures, in consultation with the inhabitants. He later recalled : "J'avis pensé qu'il était possible de concilier les principes et tous les intérêts. J'avais fait, dans cet esprit, un précis de règlement resté entre les mains d'un sieur Chauvet, un des neufs commissaires appelés près de nous. Sept l'avaient approuvé. J'étais le sauveur de la colonie. Deux heures après, j'étais un monstre à égorger."(39)

While the agents continued their deliberations, the crowd learned the object of their mission. Inflamed by the news that they had threatened governor Malartic with arrest, if he refused to implement the orders of the Directoire, the populace invaded the grounds of the 'palais' and called for their immediate departure from the colony. Powerless, and fearing for their safety, Baco and Burnel accepted to be taken aboard the corvette 'Moineau'. No regular troops came to their aid, as the latter had been confined to barracks, by armed units of the national guard, while the officers looked on, or attempted to dissuade their men from resisting. Magallon de la Morlière, commander of the garrison, gave his full support

to the islanders. He had resided in the colony since 1791 and had married into an established creole family, the Mervens. The Colonial Assembly then decreed that the vessel should take the agents to the Philippines without delay, and an embarkation order to that effect was signed by governor Malartic, and the naval and military commanders, de Sercey and Magallon. (40) The odd choice of the Philippines was explained by Burnel as an attempt to gain time for the colony. It was also intended as a deterrent, he presumed : "Puis il était bon de donner un exemple effrayant à tous ceux qui seroient tentés de venir apporter les loix de la république; puis, enfin, nous étions faits esclaves par les habitants de la côte : Vous venez apporter la liberté, eh! bien, vous la perdrez. Tel étoit le but".(41) In this way the Assembly gave notice that it would not look kindly on attempts to emancipate the slaves. In a similar vein it dispatched a letter to the Council of Five Hundred, the lower chamber in the French legislature, with the veiled threat that île de France could fall into English hands, but it assured it that : "pourvu que nous jouissions de la tranquillité intérieure, nos ennemis n'enlèveront pas à la France deux îles que la perte des Antilles lui rend plus précieuses que jamais."(42)

Fortunately for Baco and Burnel, the captain of the Moineau agreed to make route for Madagascar instead of for the coast of Luzon and after some adventures the agents reached France. (43)

What economic system had the agents of the Directoire intended to establish in île de France? They had no precedents to guide them. Indeed parallels could not be drawn with Saint-Domingue or Guadeloupe, where the large scale exodus of planters and widespread anarchy, had forced the improvisation of novel modes of cultivation. In Saint-Domingue's northern and western provinces blacks laboured for a share of the harvest in plantations run by elected "conducteurs", who in their turn owed allegiance to the state. This innovation of commissioner Polverel was adopted by Toussaint-Louverture, and was perpetuated by his successors, Dessalines and Christophe, who kept the great estates going until C. 1820, "through a kind of military feudalism based on forced labour, without the name of slavery". In the south, Fétion allowed the plantations to be subdivided into small plots, cultivated by an independent peasantry. In Guadeloupe also, plantation agriculture was transformed into a kind of "colonat partiaire"

under the supervision of inspectors. There too slavery had merely been replaced by forced labour; a fact harshly underlined by a decree of 1796 that made idleness and the refusal to work, capital crimes. (44)

Neither Baco, if we can judge from his letter of the 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1796 cited on p. 127 above, nor Burnel, intended to replace plantation agriculture with small-scale peasant cultivation or with some kind of large-scale communal agriculture. In his Essai sur les Colonies Orientales Burnel stated that Île de France was precious as a strategic outpost in the east and that it needed a large population if it was to fulfill this function adequately. He continued : "Le commerce seul peut donner ce résultat.

Pour que l'isle soit commerçante, il faut qu'elle puisse présenter des objets d'échange avec les denrées européennes; il faut enfin qu'elle soit cultivée."(45)

Burnel felt that the tropical climate called for labourers accustomed to it. While whites born in the colonies could bear the equatorial heat as well as the blacks, he believed that : "dans l'état actuel, il faut, pour cultivateurs, employer nécessairement des nègres : oui, j'en conviens, des nègres; mais, non pas des esclaves."(46)

His opposition to slavery rested on republican laws as well as on considerations of humanity. He envisaged a transition period of one year during which the slaves would be prepared for their impending freedom : "Un règlement sage

et sévère qui, en les préparant au bienfait innapréciable de la liberté, les avertiroit en même temps, qu'elle seroit perdue de nouveau pour celui qui en abuseroit; la défense de quitter la culture et les travaux accoutumés; une garde champêtre établie avant tout, dans les différents quartiers, pour réprimer, contenir et poursuivre les délinquans : des punitions rigoureuses, mais régulières, j'ai presque dit légales, substituées aux supplices arbitraires; voila pendant la première année, les moyens sûrs d'amener pour la seconde, et sans secousse la liberté de tous les nègres, et de concilier l'intérêt du planteur avec les droits de l'humanité, avec la volonté du Peuple Souverain."(47)

The proposed transition period conflicted with the provisions of the decree of 16 pluviôse for immediate emancipation, but it may have received the

tacit approval of the Directoire. In October 1799 that body drew up a list of instructions for the agents that it wanted to send to île de France, which suggested that "les modifications que pourront exiger nos colonies orientales" be given sympathetic consideration.(48) Similarly, the instructions given to Burnel, on his appointment as agent in Guiana and Cayenne on the 25 May, 1798, acknowledged that the decree of 16 pluviôse had been enforced in Cayenne, but it warned that, while the new Constitution guaranteed individual liberty, if "quelques-uns des cultivateurs, abandonnant leurs travaux, se livraient à une vie vagabonde et au désordre, ou lieu de profiter des bienfaits de la Constitution, le citoyen agent saurait la réprimer en se servant de l'autorité des lois."(49)

The colonists justified their expulsion of the agents of the Directoire in several ways. They referred primarily to their fears that immediate application of the decree of 16 pluviôse would lead to a recurrence of the events of Saint-Domingue in the Mascarenes. There was no question of immediate emancipation, but this argument rallied the populace behind the plantocracy in their attempts to retain political power. First-hand accounts of the atrocities that accompanied the Haitian civil war were available in île de France. One eye-witness was Georges Dandin who served on Sercey's flagship, La Forte. Dandin had been in the Antilles c. 1791, at the impressionable age of fourteen, and had returned with the belief that : "les annales de tous les crimes qui ont désolé la terre, ne présentent pas un tableau comme à Saint-Domingue."(50) He deplored the massacres of whites and the ultimate loss of the Antilles, but these events had been 'a leçon frappante' for île de France, and had proved its salvation, he believed.(51) Charles Stokes, who had been a prisoner of war in île de France, reported that most inhabitants were wary of a repetition of the tragedies of Saint-Domingue and was told by some of the leading islanders : "we would resist with our lives all attempts to emancipate our slaves".(52) Burnel however did not take such claims seriously. He pointed out that the crisis in the Antilles had been precipitated by the conflicts between government agents and colonial assemblies, and by the presence of : "une population nombreuse, riche et civilisée, intermédiaire entre le blanc et le nègre, la caste des mulâtres, des hommes dits de couleur ;

ceux-ci avoient eux-mêmes beaucoup d'esclaves. Les isles de France et de la Réunion ne présentent point cet obstacle majeur. Quelques centaines d'affranchis composent deux ou trois compagnies, désignées sous le nom de noirs libres. On compte dans les deux colonies cinq ou six familles de mulâtres, nés de pères et mères libres". (53)

He believed that the heterogeneity of the slave population and the lack of communications between the various categories of slaves made a servile insurrection unlikely, while the white population in the Mascarenes was too numerous and too well armed to fear that the decree would make the blacks dangerous.

Moreover he pointed out that the treatment of slaves had improved, quite recently, in the hope that a general uprising would be warded off in this way. Private interests also contributed to this since, in anticipation of eventual emancipation, slaves were neither bought, nor sold: "ainsi par le fait, la traite est abolie, l'esclavage rendu plus tolérable, par l'intérêt pressant de ménager les malheureux que l'on ne peut plus remplacer". (54)

Burnel said that the colonists attempted to justify slavery by propounding the absurd principle that "un homme noir n'est pas un homme comme eux". However he felt that their attitude was merely one of cruel egoism and greed, which made them unwilling to subordinate their private interests to the public good. They were opposed to immediate emancipation, not because they were wary of racial war, but because they feared economic losses as a result. Yet, as he himself had pointed out, Burnel added, emancipation need not be incompatible with the economic interests of the planters. (55)

The colonial standpoint was stated in a number of papers addressed to the Council of Five Hundred by the Colonial Assembly.

In a document entitled 'Motifs de l'arrêté de l'Assemblée Coloniale, du 24 ventôse ...' the Assembly argued that while the outlawing of slavery was commendable in principle, immediate emancipation had to be guarded against: "Loin de nous l'affreuse idée de vouloir justifier la

servitude des outrages qu'elle a faits à la nature! Nous dévouons à l'exécration des peuples le téméraire qui oseroit tenter cette apologie. Notre unique objet est de présenter les funestes conséquences d'une manumission imprudente qui, confondant le maître et l'affranchi, au lieu d'être un acte de bienfaisance, ne donne pour résultat que la désolation, le massacre et la famine."(56)

The Assembly denied that it was opposed to the decree of emancipation, because of the cupidity or self-interest of its members. In any case it trusted that slave-owners would receive adequate compensation for any financial loss resulting from emancipation. What it feared was a repetition of the atrocities that had marked emancipation in the Antilles, and the destruction of the colonial economy as the freed slaves withdrew from regular employment.

The Assembly stated that, in Africa, agriculture had not taken root in an infertile soil. In the few regions where it was practised, it was the task of women, while men engaged solely in hunting to secure their sustenance. It argued that liberty would allow the emancipée to gratify his taste for idleness: "l'agriculture, ce premier des arts, ne se rencontrant avec aucune des idées familières à son éducation, lui paroît une institution contre nature à laquelle il se livre qu'avec répugnance; et le ressort de la police, qui rend ses bras utiles à la terre, une fois relâché, n'espérez plus le ramener au travail. Le brigandage, la pêche, la chasse ressources bientôt épuisées dans une île de peu d'étendue, réveillent ses goûts natifs, et c'est sans retard que son naturel féroce et vagabond a repris le dessus pour sa perte et la nôtre."(57)

Not only was agricultural labour disliked and idleness favoured by the blacks, but the latter's needs were also limited. They were: "des êtres ignorans et grossiers ... pour qui manger et dormir sont le bonheur suprême". For these reasons the Assembly did not think that blacks could be induced to work voluntarily for wages. It pointed to the example of

Cayenne, where despite the claims of the civil commissary to the contrary, planters were unable to obtain labour for the clove harvest, even for the 'exorbitant' fee of one piastre per day. Because of the lack of products of exchange in Cayenne, neutral ships no longer carried foodstuffs to that colony, where famine had become rampant. (58)

If the massacres that had marked the sudden emancipation of slaves in Saint-Domingue could be averted in île de France, the Assembly continued, the threat of deserted estates, of food scarcity and of an idle and unruly liberated class would still remain. The colony would then be forced to adopt a military solution on the lines of that system prevailing in Guadeloupe and Sainte-Lucie, where blacks were kept at work on the estates by armed might. This, the Assembly argued, was a situation clearly less desirable than that of slavery, as it substituted the bayonet and the guillotine, for the often paternal punishments of slave-owners. (59)

The Assembly asked the Council of Five Hundred to delay emancipation until the slaves were ready for freedom. It called on the Council : "de laisser à la liberté son voile j'usqu'au moment où il pourra être levé sans danger". It claimed that the way to eventual freedom was being prepared in the colony in several ways. Partial enfranchisements were being encouraged and in the last two years, five thousand of the fifty thousand slaves on the island had received their liberty. In this way slavery was gradually giving way to a freedom, but while in the Antilles the enfranchised were treated as the 'rebut de l'espèce humaine', in the Mascarenes members of the freed class were treated as equals, and could aspire to honourable civil and military positions, the Assembly remarked. (60) Finally it claimed that amelioration measures were being introduced. For instance provisions of the Code Noir, that prescribed mutilation as the punishment of runaways had been repealed, while habits of industry were being encouraged amongst the slaves. (61)

In letter of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Thermidor, An VI (21 Jul. , 1796) and of the 24<sup>th</sup> Germinal, An V (13 Apr. , 1797) the Colonial Assembly reiterated some of its reasons for the expulsion of the agents of the Directoire, Baco and Burnel. (62)

It accused them of being in league with the English, and of planning to ruin the colony by freeing the slaves without a transitional

period. It wrote that the agent's intention " de gouverner par la terreur, et d'établir la domination par la destitution des autorités légales, la composition d'un jury révolutionnaire, les potences, les proscriptions et la mort" had sown terror in colonial hearts and had provoked the popular rising that had led to their ejection from the colony. (63)

Moreover the agents had attempted to apply the measure at an injudicious time, when grain stores were only sufficient for a month, and after the arrival of troops and the de Sercey squadron had raised the demand for provisions to alarming heights. Moreover, it was then sowing time and the prospect of deserted fields made famine a very real danger : "Nous étions dans la saison précieuse des ensemencemens; et la moindre indiscretion devenoit le toscan de la licence pour les cultivateurs (praedial slaves), qui déjà se disposoient à appeler la famine par l'abandon des campagnes et de leurs ateliers." (64)

While the Assembly did not deny "le désir naturel à tous les hommes de conserver une propriété légitimement acquise", it again rejected imputations that the colonists had opposed the law abolishing slavery because of their egoism or cupidity. It said that this was evidenced by the law abolishing slave-trading which, though costly to the colony since it raised operating expenses in agriculture, was readily accepted on the grounds that it would lead to a decline of slavery in the long-term. (65)

In its statement of the 24<sup>th</sup> ventôse, the Assembly castigated the decree of 16 pluviôse for ignoring African attitudes to agriculture and to labour - for overlooking 'ces causes premières d'incivilisation'. (66)

In its letter of 24 Germinal, An V, it criticised the framers of the legislation for not taking the influence of climate into account. It pointed out that slavery had been abolished in the northern and temperate zones of North America, but not in Virginia, the Carolinas and Georgia. This was so, explained the colonists, because : "Les législateurs de ces contrées ont

senti que si par des hautes ou moyennes latitudes tous les bras pouvoient également demander à la terre des reproductions nourricières, ou des denrées propres aux échanges du commerce, il n'en étoit pas de même dans la zone torride; que sous un ciel brulant plusieurs générations successives suffiroient à peine à former une race d'hommes assez accoutumés à l'ardeur du soleil, presque toujours à leur zénith, pour s'attacher

volontairement et paisiblement à la culture d'un sol qui dévore les Européens." (67)

The Assembly was overlooking the fact that their African and Malgaches labourers were also unwilling to attach themselves 'voluntarily and peacefully' to tropical cultivation on planters' terms, and that they had to be kept in chains for that purpose.

In its correspondence on the subject of Baco and Burnel, and on its refusal to accept the decree of 16 pluviôse, the Assembly stated, in no uncertain terms, that the colonists' allegiance to France would not extend beyond "l'obéissance à celle des lois de la France qui ne contrarient pas trop à leur localité". (68)

Although the island's autonomy was unchallenged, so long as war raged in Europe, the Assembly still attempted to justify its behaviour in the eyes of the metropolitan government. This was done in various ways. On the one hand, as was seen above, the agents were pictured as reckless men with dictatorial ambitions. Their intentions were distorted and it was implied that their dangerous plans would bring ruin and chaos to the colony. On the other hand, the Assembly greatly exaggerated its own concern for improving the slaves' welfare. For instance, the ban on slave-trading, which was promulgated in the island in September 1794, seems to have been nothing but a cosmetic measure, probably designed to placate public opinion in France. There were some token prosecutions, but Filliot points to the frequent reiterations of the ban by the colonial legislature as evidence of its inefficacy. The law could be infringed at will with the aid of privateers : even the famous Surcouf was reported to have dabbled in this illicit commerce. While, from 1794 to 1797, the volume of slave-trading to the Mascarenes had fallen to some 20 % below the 1791 to 1793 level, or to an average of 1 000 slaves per annum, it rose subsequently to double that figure. By 1800, Gillot L'Etang, a deputy of Réunion island, in île de France, could remark : "Si la traite n'est point permise, on ne peut pas nier qu'elle soit tolérée". (69)

Similarly, claims that ten per cent of the slave population had been liberated in two years, by means of partial manumissions, seem to be grossly exaggerated. According to the Statistique, enfranchisements numbered only 564 in île de France during the entire period of revolutionary

rule, which amounts to a mere 0,08% per annum. Even the assumption of a higher 0,2% rate in the manuscript version is still significantly below the colonists' claim. (70) It could be argued that selective manumissions were by no means motivated chiefly by altruism. News of the revolution had led to some restlessness in slave ranks, which was reflected in a steep increase in the incidence of 'marronage'. R. d'Unienville writes that in 1791 : "le nombre des noirs marrons était devenu 'prodigieux', créant une situation qui réclamait toute l'attention de la garde nationale des quartiers." (71) Given this fact, given that republican troops were indisciplined, and that in the early 1790's, 'la garde nationale était en crise', a tentative suggestion can be made that the planters used partial enfranchisements as a device to reduce tensions within slave ranks, so as to ward off the possibility of servile insurrections. (72)

Later in the same decade, to prevent an alliance of republican troops and revolted slaves, the Assembly secured the transfer of the 12<sup>th</sup> bataillon, which had accompanied Baco and Burnel, to Batavia, soon after the latter's expulsion. Wary of the revolutionary sentiments of the regulars of the 107<sup>th</sup> and 108<sup>th</sup> regiments, who remained in the island, the colonists arranged to have them sent to the same destination. It was then rumoured that they were being sent to their death, while the colony was going to surrender to the English in their absence. Toussaint writes, that in response, "Les 'bleus', dont beaucoup vivaient avec des femmes esclaves, se mutinèrent aussitôt, et essayèrent de proclamer par la force des armes, la liberté des noirs." (73) The revolt was suppressed by the national guard, and the mutinous grenadiers accepted the compromise of governor Malartic, that they should sail to France instead of to the East Indies. (74)

The Colonial Assembly of Ile de France professed its attachment to France, in part because it feared retribution for the 'rebellion' of 1796. Yet it does not seem that its protestations to the Directory, regarding the Baco-Burnel affair, were read with indulgence since, as late as 1799, the metropolitan government was still toying with the idea of restoring its authority in its East Indian island-colonies, and of applying the decree of 16 pluviôse there. (75) However, the métropole was unable to act as it was faced with political dissensions and financial difficulties at home. Externally, it was engaged in continental wars, and, from 1798, in the

Egyptian campaign, so that it was unable to suppress the 'rebellion' in the Mascarenes. (76) Moreover île de France was helping the war effort by arming privateers, which were employed against English shipping en route to India, gaining notoriety in British eyes as a 'nest of pirates'. In this capacity, It was more an asset than a liability to French interests in the Indian Ocean. (77)

### 3. Slavery reaffirmed 1802 to 1810.

Insular autonomy was finally shattered on 27<sup>th</sup> September, 1803, when general Magallon, who had succeeded Malartic in 1800, transferred his office to the newly-appointed governor, captain-general Decaen. On the following day, the latter dissolved the Colonial Assembly in terms of the decree of 2 February, 1803 (13 pluviôse An X). This measure applied the new principles of colonial policy to the Mascarenes, and subjected colonial government to administrative regulations for the next ten years. (78)

The peace of Amiens had permitted this restoration of metropolitan authority in the islands of France and Réunion, as it offered safe passage to counter-admiral Linois' squadron which transported the representatives of the Consulate to the Indian Ocean. (79) While Decaen had the backing of eight hundred loyal troops to enforce his authority, the continued existence of his administration depended ultimately on colonial approval, since the resumption of hostilities with England, once more isolated the Mascarenes from the mother country and prevented reinforcements from being sent to his aid on any substantial scale. (80) This approval was not immediately forthcoming since, under the new regime, the colonists lost the political power which they had enjoyed since 1790. Leading inhabitants were consulted on some fiscal matters, but beyond this they did not participate in internal government. However, although the loss of political representation was resented and Decaen's despotic rule-by-decree was disapproved of, the colonists came to terms with the new political dispensation, chiefly because it had : "restauré ou plutôt conservé ce qu'ils considéraient comme la condition même de leur existence : un état social fondé sur l'esclavage". (81)

This coincidence of colonial and metropolitan interests on the

subject of slavery may be explained, in part, by reference to the drastic reversal in French colonial policy, from the time of Forfait's appointment as Minister of Marine and Colonies in November 1799, when the Directoire was in its death throes. Forfait attributed France's colonial problems to the decree of 16 pluviôse, An II, and recommended that slavery and the slave trade be restored. At the same time he urged that the 'préjugés de caste' be maintained, calling in particular for manumissions to be 'motivés et très rares' and for the abolition of the rights of natural offspring of racially mixed unions, to inherit from their fathers. Finally, he called for the prohibition of black emigration to France. (82) These recommendations formed the basis of the colonial policy of the Consulate and Empire. They found favour with Decrès, Forfait's successor, who remained in office till the abdication of Napoleon in 1814, and with the large number of officials, who had served the 'ancien régime', and who were reinstated in their functions. One of them, Guillemain de Vaivre, who was appointed as head of the division of colonies by Forfait, had been intendant of Saint-Domingue in 1773 and intendant-général des îles from 1783 to 1792. A strong supporter of the status quo ante 1789, de Vaivre was eager to reemploy his former colleagues. (83)

These changes were in line with the thinking of the Consulate on colonial policy. In practice this was merely a reflection of Napoleon's views on the subject. After the Directoire was deposed in a coup d'Etat on the 9<sup>th</sup> November, 1799, Napoleon became France's effective ruler. It has been argued that the outlook of the many creoles in his entourage and of his first wife Joséphine de Beauharnais, who came from a wealthy creole family of Martinique, greatly influenced Napoleon's attitude to colonial affairs. However, while this may be true to some extent, Napoleon's colonial policy was essentially characterised by pragmatism. He knew that France's economic wealth rested to a large extent on colonial trade. He believed that colonies were required for economic progress, both as sources of raw materials and as outlets for French manufactured goods. During the 1790's colonial production had declined drastically in the Antilles, because of the labour problem arising from slave revolts and the abolition of slavery. Napoleon felt that the revival of colonial production depended on the restoration of slavery. (84)

These beliefs were embodied in the law of 20 May, 1802 (30 floréal,

An X) drafted the second consul, J. J. R. de Cambacérés. The law's first two clauses enshrined the institution of slavery, the third restored the slave trade as it existed before 1789. The short document stated simply :

"Article 1. Dans les colonies restituées à la France, en exécution du traité d'Amiens du 6 Germinal An X, l'esclavage sera maintenu conformément aux lois et règlements antérieurs à 1789.

Article 2. Il en sera de même dans les autres colonies françaises au delà du Cap de Bonne Espérance.

Article 3. La traite des noirs et leur importation dans les dites colonies auront lieu conformément aux lois et règlements existants avant la dite époque de 1789". (85)

The application of this law and of other ministerial decrees, in the Mascarenes, was in the hands of a triumvirate headed by Decaen, the captain-general, who was responsible for defence, the sanctioning of colonial legislation and the appointment of officials. Internal administration was shared by two other functionaries, Léger, the colonial prefect, in charge of finances, police and the marine, and, Crespin, the commissary of justice, who was in control of the tribunals, the administration of justice and the drafting of colonial laws and regulations. (86)

Decaen had been instructed to uphold slavery and "de maintenir avec soin la distance des couleurs sur laquelle repose l'existence coloniale", (87) but he was not a convinced partisan of slavery and is said to have held no firm prejudices against blacks or mulattoes. The same was true of Léger. On the other hand, Crespin, the commissary of justice, who had resided in île de France since 1790, shared the views of the colonists on racial matters and was determined to entrench their interests. He became the chief architect of that retrograde social policy which characterised the final years of French rule in the island. It is true that much of this legislation with a racial content, that is, affecting freed men and slaves,

originated in Paris, but Crespin frequently exceeded ministerial instructions in putting it into effect. (88)

David Brion Davis points to a contradiction inherent in slavery which arises "because slaves are men who are defined as things". (89) He says that throughout history, slaves have generally been defined as chattels, with no contractual capacity and totally subject to the authority of their owners. At the same time it had to be recognised that slaves were more than beasts of burden. (90) This underlying contradiction of slavery was reflected, for instance, in the slave codes drawn up in France's West Indian colonies at the end of the seventeenth century. On the one hand, they attempted to regulate the slaves' condition as a form of conveyable property, on the other, "as a man who might be protected, punished or prevented from exercising human capacities". (91) Thus the Code Noir's provisions for the religious instructions of slaves and those regulating the material conditions under which slaves lived were a recognition of the slaves' humanity. (92)

Crespin did not attempt to resolve this ambiguity in drafting slave legislation, but placed an undue emphasis on the concept of slaves as chattels, so that the limited legal protection the latter had enjoyed was drastically eroded. In the past slaves could be prosecuted for criminal offences, but this was done in accordance with entrenched methods of criminal prosecution. However a law of 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1803 ( 11 frimaire, An XII) instituted special tribunals for the prosecution of slaves under "des formes plus abrégées", in the hope that swift and severe retribution would maintain the slave population in a state of obedience and respect. These courts of nine members, three of whom were proprietor-colonists, met behind closed doors if necessary, since, as Crespin put it, public debate of slave misdeeds could hurt the colonial order even more than the crimes themselves. (93) Many slaves were convicted on flimsy evidence by these special tribunals. Réunion island's sub-prefect, Marchant, criticised both their composition and speedy procedures. He warned that : "on aurait tort de penser que la constatation des délits des esclaves exigeait moins de recherches, de talents que celles des délits d'une autre classe; il importe à la société que les esclaves ne puissent se flatter d'obtenir l'impunité de la faiblesse d'un tribunal, ni qu'ils doutent de la sûreté qu'ils doivent trouver dans leur innocence." (94)

Crespin's reluctance to accept the ambivalence of the slaves' judicial status and to accept that slaves were men, led him to progressively curtail the assimilation of slaves in free society via the practice of manumissions.

D'Unienville estimated an enfranchisement rate of 2<sup>0</sup>/100 per annum over the period 1767-1810 but he conceded that this rate fell during the 1804-1810 period. (95) It has already been pointed out that manumissions were quite frequent in the 1790's, though not as frequent as was claimed by the Colonial Assembly. Under Crespin's regime however they fell drastically. Prentout reckoned that enfranchisements totalled 244 out of a servile population of 60 000 from November 1804 to the end of 1806, but that the rate of enfranchisement was falling continually from 95 in the 1st quarter of 1805 to 21 in the last quarter of 1806. (96)

A decree of 10 November 1804 ( 19 brumaire , An XII) made manumissions conditional on a long period of service, unless the slaves had performed some noteworthy action for the benefit of their masters, or of the colony. The measure made manumissions more costly and subject to prior compliance with numerous bureaucratic formalities. (97) Testamentary manumissions were restricted by a decree of November 1805. The same act still recognised enfranchisements resulting from marriage between freemen and slaves, but this possibility was progressively limited by various decrees until it was stipulated, in August 1806 , that such unions could only take place after the slaves had been duly enfranchised. If, as usually was the case, those slaves were women, their children under the age of seven had also to be set free at the prohibitive cost of 500 francs per slave. This last decree effectively put an end to such marriages. Crespin wrote to Decaen that, since they were normally concluded after the partners had lived in concubinage for some time, and after the birth of several children, their authorisation on a large-scale would lead to the sudden uplifting : "à la société civile, des individus qui n'avaient pas été élevés de manière à en connaître et à en pratiquer les obligations, et qui, dans la suite, pourraient avoir besoin des secours de la bienfaisance." (98)

Thus Crespin believed that slaves were inassimilable in free society. The enfranchised class had always been seen as tainted with the stigma of servitude, but after 1803 the legal disabilities affecting that class increased markedly.

#### 4. The 1790's - An interpretation.

The policy of statutory discrimination against the 'libres' pursued in the last decade of French rule contrasted sharply with the situation in the 1790's, when relations between whites and libres had been improving. During that decade an alliance had been forged between planters of differing ethnic origins, on the basis of shared property interests. Political rights had been extended to free persons, irrespective of colour, who otherwise fulfilled the franchise requirements of the colonial constitution of 1791. (99) The libres were the unconsulted partners in that marriage of convenience. As Burnet pointed out, they lacked the power of their counterparts in the Antilles. (100)

A contemporary estimate shows that in 1806, the 'libres', who then equalled the whites in number, owned 6% of the livestock and 7% of its slaves. In the Savanne district in 1815, the land holdings of 53 white planters averaged 280,3 hectares in area, as against an average of 10 hectares in the case of 21 landowners classified as libres. Total slave ownership in the district amounted to 3 810 for whites and to 169 for libres. (101) However these are ambiguous figures as some 'libres' undoubtedly owned more extensive estates. Moreover the large number of libres who were small planters and had an interest both in private property and in slave labour was too large to be ignored.

As stated above, the increasing discrimination to which the 'libres' were subject in the last years of French rule, reflected a belief that slaves could not be assimilated in free society. Hardening racial attitudes therefore also imply changed attitudes to slavery. To explain these changes one must examine the nature of racial discrimination in the Mauritian context.

Karl Noël who studied Mauritian slavery at some length linked discriminatory behaviour to the jealousy of white women who felt threatened by mulatto or black rivals. He wrote : "L'on sait d'ailleurs comment, dans toutes les colonies, ce sont les femmes qui entretiennent le plus les préjugés de couleur, et par ce fait, veillent à empêcher, ou tout au moins à retarder, cette fusion inévitable des races dans laquelle Schoelcher voyait le salut des colonies". (102)

It may be that white women played some part in preventing racial integration in the Mascarenes and in fanning the flames of racial prejudices. However their rôle in establishing racial discrimination must not be exaggerated. Even when there were only a handful of white women in the Mascarenes, mixed marriage was prohibited by law. The Code Noir of 1685 had only proscribed the cohabitation of masters and slaves. When this law extended to the islands in 1723, it went much further, in that it outlawed all inter-racial marriages, irrespective of the civil status of the persons involved. Article 5 stated : " Défendons à nos sujets blancs de l'un et l'autre sexe de contracter mariage avec les noirs, à peine de punition et d'amende arbitraire, et à tous les curés, prêtres ou missionnaires séculiers ou réguliers et même aux aumôniers des vaisseaux de les marier. "(103)

So long as white women were in short supply in the colony, the law remained a dead letter. White colonists were not deterred by the threat of fines or by the force of public opinion from selecting long-standing concubines amongst the slave or libres women. The number of white women in the colonial population did increase during the course of the eighteenth century, but as late as 1806, there were still two white males for every white female in the island, as compared to two libres females for each male in that category. The disproportion of women amongst the libres reflected the common practice of white men freeing their slave concubines. For example in 1804-6, of 244 slaves that were set free, 129 were women, 63 children, but only 52 were men. (104) In December, 1810 James Prior visited the Malabar camp. He noted that : "Very many pretty girls of colour, mistresses to the whites, reside here". (105) Crespin's attempts to restrict manumissions are unlikely to have stopped this practice. The prohibitions were either disregarded or evaded. Thus the women Marianne and Babet who arrived at Port-Louis on 26 July, 1807 on the Danish vessel Balder were described in the passenger list as "négresses ayant été à Tranquellar pour se faire affranchir". (106) The same was true of Geneviève and Gertrude who returned on the Maria in August of that year, and it is quite likely that Sidney "fils de la nommée Cocotte, femme libre, passé en France pour son éducation" who reached the colony in 1804 on l'Antoinette, sailing from Copenhagen, was the son of a wealthy white colonist. (107)

The above suggests that the small number of white women on the island was powerless to stop widespread concubinage between master and slave. White women may have provided ammunition for the ideologies of racialism, but they cannot be blamed for all its manifestations. Moreover, if the experience of other slave-owning societies is anything to go by, they did not always have to appeal to colour prejudice in their opposition to concubinage, but could also denounce it as contrary to the ideals of christian marriage. (108)

In countries of recent white settlement, racial hatred has frequently been linked to the fears of white manual workers of the competition of black artisans. The former established privileged positions in earlier times, when a monopoly of scarce skills had guaranteed them high remunerations. The threat of competition to depress these earnings and to lower their status in society, led white workers to develop feelings of animosity towards their rivals, that only physical differences now set apart from them. (109) There is little evidence that this is what lay at the roots of racial prejudice in île de France. There, from the time of Labourdonnais, skilled workmen had been recruited in India and craftsmanship had not become entrenched as the special attribute of white workmen alone. Moreover the 'petits blancs' of Port Louis were just as deprived of political representation as the freemen of colour. High franchise requirements condemned the former to the status of 'citoyens passifs', while skin colour disqualified the latter from participating in public life until at least 1791. Thereafter only a handful of wealthy libres benefited from the constitutional changes in the ensuing decade. We thus find a community of interest between 'petits blancs' and libres which can account for the political activities of the capital's workmen during the Revolution - activities which aristocratic observers with royalist sympathies and later-day chroniclers branded unrealistically as those of "gens sans aveu et de mauvaise conduite" or of the "professionnels du désordre". (110)

The increased racial discrimination which characterised the period of imperial rule in île de France must be seen as a response to the attempts made to abolish slavery in the preceding decade.

Before the 1790's French colonial slavery was not seriously challenged. Anti-slavery sentiment animated some intellectual circles

in France, but the colonists themselves were insulated from its radiation by distance, and by the weakness and disorganised state of the opposition. At Île de France, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's accusations of planter cruelty may have been resented and vehemently denied. Pierre Poivre's largely academic opposition to slavery was perhaps admired, while de Ternay's stand against that institution failed to make him unpopular. Indeed, although these two administrators were said to have opposed slavery in principle, they did nothing to end it in practice. Moreover, slavery and slave-trading received official approval and encouragement, and could easily be justified by appeal to natural law. During the Revolutionary decade however slavery became subject to official disapproval, while it could no longer be justified on moral grounds. In the 'Motifs de l'Assemblée Coloniale, du 24 ventôse', it was recalled: "Loin de nous l'affreuse

idée de vouloir justifier la servitude des outrages qu'elle a faits à la nature ... Le droit public, adopté par toutes les nations policées, s'étoit j'usqu'à ces derniers temps, dépravé au point, que l'esclavage étoit considéré comme un des éléments du contrat social; et telle étoit à cet égard l'aberration des principes, que son institution étoit même regardée comme favorable à l'humanité, parcequ'en substituant la servitude à la mort, elle avoit pour objet la conservation de l'individu pris à la guerre. Ainsi c'est non seulement sous la sauve-garde des lois particulières à chaque gouvernement envisagé isolément, mais aussi sous la garantie, pour ainsi dire, du droit des gens, que l'esclavage avoit-été considéré dans les colonies."(111)

Yet if the colonists were to withstand the assaults of the abolitionists they needed to legitimise the system of slavery. They found a rationale for it in theories of racial inferiority and of the physiological suitability of blacks for tropical labour. Winthrop Jordan points out that, even in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Englishmen were racially prejudiced. There is little doubt that the same was true of Mauritian planters before 1790. However in both these cases racial differences, real or imagined, were not seen as socially important. After the decade of the 1790's however, these differences were used to legitimise slavery in Ile de France.

They became the strands that held the slave

system together against external attacks and internal tensions. The change of régime provided the opportunity for entrenching these attitudes by means of legislation. At the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century île de France's planters had definitely rejected what they regarded as the Cayenne-option, that is a system of voluntary labour based on the payment of wages. Blacks were unsuited by nature for freedom, they believed and would only labour if chained. A planter wrote at the time that the existence of colonies was dependent on the : "maintien de la servitude, seul moyen de contraindre au travail une espèce d'hommes indolents par nature et sur lesquels les affectations sociales et les intitutions religieuses n'ont aucune prise."(112)

Notes to Chapter 3.

- (1) cf. Chapter 2, above.
- (2) 'Voyage à l'île de France' in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Oeuvres Choiesies ... - Op.cit., pp. 215-216. Bernardin implicitly argued that free labour was more productive than slave labour. This view was shared by Poivre who put his case more forcibly.
- (3) J. van den Heuvel in Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Paul et Virginie, Op.cit. p. 25  
Bernardin de Saint-Pierre Oeuvres Choiesies ... - Op.cit., pp. 371-372. passim.  
Note: In 'Suite des Voeux d'un Solitaire', Bernardin acknowledged that his previous account had been moderate in tone. This was due to his attempt to reconcile the conflicting interests of the monarchy, the clergy, the nobility, the ministers and the academics with those of the nation.  
Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Oeuvres Choiesies ... - Op.cit., pp. 451-2
- (4) Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Oeuvres Choiesies ... - Op.cit., pp 409-412.
- (5) Ibid, pp. 412-13. It is not clear what Bernardin meant by 'free agriculture' and the 'subdivision of vast plantations'. It appears that he was thinking of a system of tenant farming since he says of the planters (habitants) that : "au lieu d'esclaves étrangers, ils auraient des fermiers compatriotes, et au lieu d'habitations, des seigneuries" (p. 413) (my own emphasis)
- (6) Ibid
- (7) Le Duc, Saint-Elme. - Op.cit., p. 84
- (8) Ibid, pp. 85-6.  
Ly Tio Fane, M. (ed) Mauritius .... - Op.cit., pp. 4-5, 9.
- (9) Poivre, Pierre. Travels of a Philosopher or Observations on the Manners and Arts of various Nations in Africa and Asia, Dublin, 1770 p. iii.
- (10) Ibid, p. 89.
- (11) Ibid, p. 121.
- (12) Ibid, pp. 110-119,120.
- (13) Cited in Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit., p. 101.
- (14) Ibid, p. 87.  
Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit., I, p. 202.

(15) cf. Introduction.

Noël, K. - Op.cit. , pp. 305-307. Poivre views coincided with those of the Physiocrats. Like them he favoured private property in land and limitations on authority so as to secure liberty for the agriculturalists. His biographer, Dupont de Nemours, who married his widow in 1795, was a noted physiocrat and an opponent of slavery, and may have been too indulgent in recording Poivre's lifetime achievements. When the latter's actions at île de France are examined, and if it is remembered that Poivre was accused of trafficking in slaves by governors Dumas (1767-1768) and Desroches (1769-1772), his legendary opposition to slavery may well be doubted.

(16) Le Duc, Saint-Elme- Op.cit. , p. 124.

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, Oeuvres Choisies . . . -Op.cit. , p. 207.

Bernardin wrote that : "Les soldats fournissent beaucoup d'ouvriers, car la chaleur permet aux blancs d'y travailler en plein air".

Ternay made a similar observation.

(17) Le Duc, Saint-Elme. - Op.cit. , p. 124.

(18) Gaston-Martin. - Op.cit. , pp. 166-171.

(19) Lokke, C.L. France and the Colonial Question : A Study of Contemporary French Opinion 1760-1801., Columbia University Press, New York, 1932, p. 126.

Goodwin, A. The French Revolution, Arrow Books, London, 1962 (Reprint of 1956 rev. ed.) p. 84.

(20) Duchêne, A. La Politique Coloniale de la France : Le Ministère des Colonies depuis Richelieu, Payot, Paris, 1928, pp. 115, 132-133.

Lokke, C.L. - Op.cit. , pp. 126-127.

(21) Gaston-Martin - Op.cit. , p. 188-190.

(22) Lokke, C.L. - Op.cit. , p. 128.

Williams, E. Capitalism . . . . . - Op.cit. , pp. 86-87.

Duncan Rice, C. -The Rise and Fall of Black Slavery, the Macmillan Press Ltd. , London, 1975, p. 224.

(23) Girard, L. , et al , Le Temps des Révolutions 1715-1870. Editions Bordas, Paris, 1969, pp. 140-149.

Crawley, C.W. (ed) The New Cambridge Modern History vol IX, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1965, pp. 277-281.

- (24) Blet, M. -Op. cit. , pp. 22,23.  
Gaston-Martin - Op. cit. , pp. 221-222, 226.  
Hardy, G. - Op. cit. , p. 122.
- (25) Ibid, pp. 118-119.  
Gaston-Martin - Op. cit. , pp. 221 et seq.  
Lokke, C.L. - Op. cit. ,pp. 140-145.  
Note that the subsidy on the slave trade had been abolished on 4th April ,  
1792 and that the slave trade itself had been abolished on 27 July,1793.  
This ban was applied to île de France in 1794. ( Blet, H. -Op. cit. , pp 16-  
17, Filliot, J.M. - Op. cit. , p. 65)
- (26) Napal, D. Les Constitutions . . . . . , pp. 2 - 3
- (27) Ibid, pp. 3-4.  
Prentout, H. - Op. cit. , p. 87 says that the royalist faction, made up  
of noble proprietors and of retired military officers, although a  
minority, were an important force in the assembly : "ils avaient pour eux  
leurs richesses, leur situation sociale, et même, disait-on, l'intelligence  
cf. note 32 below on 'Citoyens actifs'.
- (28) Ibid.  
Bourde de la Rogerie, H. Les Bretons aux îles de France et de Bourbon  
au XVII<sup>e</sup> et au XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles, Imprimerie Oberthur, Rennes, 1934,  
pp. 340-341.  
Toussaint, A. Port-Louis . . . . . - Op. cit. , pp. 136,167.
- (29) Ibid. p. 166  
A. Maure - Op. cit. , p. 81, also cited in Ibid.  
Prentout, H. - Op. cit. , pp. 83,84,87.
- (30) Toussaint, A. L'Administration Française de l'île Maurice et ses  
Archives 1721-1810, Imprimerie Commerciale, Port Louis, 1965,p. 29  
Prentout, H. - Op. cit. , pp. 83-84, 88.
- (31) Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op. cit. , p. 284. Both M.J. Milbert and  
C.F. Tombe found the system of censorship and of the screening of  
immigrants in operation when they arrived at Port-Louis, in 1801 and  
1803, respectively. cf. Milbert, M.J. - Op. cit. , I, pp 121-122  
Tombe, C.F. - Op. cit. , p. 60.
- (32) Toussaint, A. L'Administration Française. . . . . p. 31 tells us that the  
national guard was set up in early 1790 to replace the milice coloniale.  
(fd 1768). This latter body had included inhabitants aged between 15

and 55 years. A decree of the Colonial Assembly of 2 May, 1793 stipulated that all "citoyens actifs" had to register for membership of the national guard. In Port Louis . . . Op. cit. , p. 136 n 3 Auguste Toussaint, lists the requirements for the 'citoyen actif'.

- These were: (i) French citizenship. This could be acquired by marriage, or by a four year term residence in the colony, or by the acquisition of landed property there
- (ii) Twenty five years of age or more.
  - (iii) Residence of two years in the island, or the ownership of landed property and of a place of abode for three years.
  - (iv) Anyone, 'dans l'état de domesticité servile', i. e. in personal service, was not eligible.
  - (v) Bankruptcy, insolvency disqualified persons from becoming citoyens actifs.
  - (vi) Membership in the national guard.

(33) Prentout, H. - Op. cit. , pp. 83-84.

(34) Hardy, G. - Op. cit. , pp. 121-122.

(35) Toussaint, A. - Port Louis . . . - Op. cit. , pp. 137-138.

'Burnel, agent particulier du Directoire Executif aux Colonies Orientales à tous ceux qui ont lu l'adresse de l'Assemblée Colonial de l'île de France' - Paris, 17 Frimaire An V (7 Dec. , 1796) - reproduced in full in Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op. cit. , pp. 290-291.

Burnel was a member of the colonial Directoire in 1794. This body was a commission of 4 members charged with colonial administration in terms of the Constitution of 1791. cf. Toussaint, A. L'Administration Française. Op. cit. , pp. 93-94.

(36) Prentout, H. - Op. cit. , pp. 86-87 wrote that the expeditionary force consisted of 800 men of the 12<sup>th</sup> infantry bataillon and of two companies of divisional artillery.

Toussaint's statement that 18 000 troops arrived with the de Sercey squadron is incorrect. cf Port Louis . . . - Op. cit. , p. 137.

(37) Blet, H. - Op. cit. , p. 4

Hardy, G. - Op. cit. , p. 120.

Girard, L. et al, - Op. cit. , pp. 161-162.

Note that the 'Constitution de l'An I' (June, 1793) was suspended in October of that year. (Ibid, p. 149)

- Crawley, C.W. (ed) - Op. cit. , pp. 286-287.
- (38) Hardy, G. - Op. cit. , pp. 118-119.
- (39) Letter of 14 Frimaire, An V (4<sup>th</sup> Dec. , 1796) signed Baco and printed in Le Moniteur of 14<sup>th</sup> December, cited in Le Duc, Saint-Elme -Op. cit. pp. 289-290. De Villèle, cited in Toussaint, A. Port-Louis...-Op. cit. pp. 138-141.
- Bourde de la Rogerie, H. - Op. cit. , p. 346.
- (40) Ibid. An establishment in Port Louis belonging to the Mervens dealt in slaves (Toussaint, A. Port Louis.... Op. cit. , p. 130)
- (41) Burnel, E.L.P. Essai sur les Colonies Orientales, 1796, Manuscript copy in Curepipe's Carnegie Library, p. 21.
- (42) Letter of Assemblée Coloniale to the Corps Législatif, dated Port Nord Ouest, 24 Germinal, An V (13<sup>th</sup> Apr. , 1797) Enclosure II in Message du Directoire Exécutif au Conseil des Cinq-Cents, le 27 Messidor, An V (15<sup>th</sup> Jul. , 1797) Manuscript copy in Curepipe's Carnegie Library
- (43) Toussaint, A. Port-Louis.... - Op. cit. , p. 141 n.1.
- (44) Parry, J.H. & Sherlock, P.M. - Op. cit. , pp. 167-169.
- Blet, H. - Op. cit. , p. 22.
- Leroy-Beaulieu, P. - Op. cit. , I, pp. 219-220.
- (45) Burnel - Op. cit. , p. 9.
- (46) Ibid.

Burnel said that creole whites did not choose to brave the burning sun because of their "molle éducation" but he had many proofs that their capacity for working outdoors was probably greater than that of blacks. His view that European-born colonists lacked this capacity is at variance with the observation of travellers, such as Sonnerat and Bernardin de Saint-Pierre; does not accord with the climatic realities of Mauritius where excessive temperatures are seldom recorded, because of the island's distance from continental land masses and the tempering effect of sea breezes. cf. Introduction . Prinsen Geerlings, H.C. The World's Cane Sugar Industry : Past and Present, N.R. Altrincham, Manchester, 1912, p. 306.

B. Higgins , referring inter alia to the work of D.H.K. Lee Climate and Development in the Tropics, New York, 1957 has written that " the direct impact of climate on human beings seems to be the least important of the various effects of tropical climate on productivity". cf. B. Higgins

Economic Development ; Principles, Problems, and Policies. Revised ed. Constable and Co. Ltd. , London 1959, p. 213.

On review the findings of various researchers Gunnar Myrdal stated, somewhat less categorically than Higgins, that : "conclusive evidence is lacking as to the impact of the 'tropical' climate on the capacity and efficiency of labour." However, he added : " The popular theory that indigenous people are more able than Europeans to cope with the climatic stresses of the region is not established; the opposite might be true in view of the European's better nutrition and health". cf. Myrdal, G. Asian Drama : An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations, Pantheon, New York 1968, III, p. 2136.

(47) Burnel - Op.cit. , p. 16.

(48) Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit. , p. 285. This second project of sending agents to the Mascarenes was still-born.

(49) Ibid, p. 291.

(50) cf. de Villèle's account of the expulsion of Baco and Burnel in Toussaint, A. Port Louis, . . . . Op.cit. , pp. 138-141.

Société de l'Histoire de l'Île Maurice - Journal Historique de Georges Dandin 1777-1812, avec une préface d'Auguste Toussaint, Imprimerie Moderne de l'Emyrne, Tananarive, pp. 4-7, 82-83.

(51) Ibid, p. 16.

(52) Cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit. , pp. 179,188,189.

(53) Burnel, E.L.P. - Op.cit. , pp. 15-16.

(54) Ibid, pp. 14,15.

(55) Ibid, pp. 10.12.13.

(56) 'Motifs de l'arrêté de l'Assemblée Coloniale du 24 ventôse, qui déclare que le décret de la Convention du 16 pluviôse, relatif à la liberté des Noirs Esclaves est inadmissible dans la colonie, quant à présent'. A Paris, De L'imprimerie Nationale , Thermidor, An V. Enclosure no. V in Message du Directoire Exécutif . . . - Op.cit. , p. 28.

(57) Ibid, pp. 29-30, 36-37.

(58) Ibid, pp. 32-33, 38.

(59) Ibid, pp. 34,40.

(60) Ibid, pp. 36-37,39.

(61) Ibid, p. 37.

(62) Letter of Assemblée Coloniale to Corps Législatif, dated Port Nord-Ouest 3 Thermidor, An IV;

Letter of Assemblée Coloniale to Corps Législatif, dated Port Nord-Oues 24 Germinal, An V, Enclosures III & II respectively in Message du Directoire Exécutif... - Op. cit. ,

- (63) Ibid, pp. 10.11.15.
- (64) Ibid, pp. 5,8,16.
- (65) Ibid, pp. 5,13-14.
- (66) 'Motifs....' - Op. cit. , p. 27.
- (67) Letter of Assemblée Coloniale ... , 24 Germinal, An V, -Op. cit. , p. 6.
- (68) Ibid, p. 4.
- (69) Filliot, J.M. - Op. cit. , pp. 54,55, 65-67.
- (70) Unienville, M.C.A.M. , baron d' - Op. cit. , Tableau No. 41.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , p 759.
- (71) Unienville, R. d' (ed) Histoire Politique de l'Isle de France (1789-1791)  
L. Carl Achille, Imprimeur du Gouvernement, Port Louis, 1975, p. 65.
- (72) Ibid.
- (73) Le Duc, Saint-Elme, - Op. cit. , pp. 307,312.  
Toussaint, A. Port-Louis.... - Op. cit. , p. 141.
- (74) Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op. cit. , pp. 307-308 cf. also Pridham, C. -  
Op. cit. , pp. 63-66.
- (75) Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op. cit. , p. 285.
- (76) Grant, A.J. & Temperley, H. Europe in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries (1789-1950) 6th ed. revised by L.M. Penson, Longman, London, 1952. pp. 62-72.
- (77) cf. Toussaint, A. Port-Louis,.... Op. ci. t, pp. 168-183.
- (78) Ibid, p. 187.
- (79) Ibid, Decaen was to govern French possessions east of the Cape of Good Hope from the town of Pondichéry on the Coromandel coast, but the English refused to surrender that settlement together with the other four trading posts that had been captured from the French in the 1790's. Decaen withdrew to île de France, where he received the news of the resumption of war, on 25<sup>th</sup> September, 1803, more than a month later, as well as orders for assuming the governor-generalship of the Mascarenes. Ibid. pp. 186-7.
- (80) Le Duc, Saint-Elme, p. 359. Mauritian writers have tended to explain the lack of material aid extended by the métropole to the Mascarenes after 1803, in terms of the feelings of animosity of minister Decrès

for a colony where he was nearly lynched by an enraged mob for his anti-revolutionary sentiments and where he had been refused the hand of two daughters of prominent creole families whom he had successively asked to marry him. cf. *Ibid*, pp. 395-401; Toussaint, A. Port-Louis... Op. cit., p. 186 note 1; Toussaint A. in *Société de l'histoire de l'île Maurice; Dictionnaire de Biographie Mauricienne* No. 5, June, 1942, p. 137.

- (81) Prentout, H. - Op. cit., pp. 99, 118-120. The decree of 13 pluviôse An X established consular administration in the Mascarenes. Article 17, stipulated that three major planters and three principal merchants had to be consulted by the colonial prefect on the subject of the incidence of taxation ('quant à la répartition des contributions qui seront établies par le gouvernement') cf. Le Duc, Saint-Elme -Op. cit., p. 452.  
Toussaint, A. Port-Louis... - Op. cit., p. 190, n2.
- (82) Duchêne, A. - Op. cit., pp. 139-140.  
Prentout, H. - Op. cit., pp. 96-7. These recommendations were in the memorandum, 'L'Etat des Colonies de la France à l'Epoque de la Paix Conclue à Amiens, le 6 Germinal, An X (25 March, 1802)' written after Forfait's replacement by Decrès, as minister responsible for colonies.
- (83) Duchêne, A. - Op. cit., pp. 52, 53, 134, 139-141.
- (84) Hardy, G. - Op. cit., pp. 130, 132.  
Lefebvre, G. Napoleon from 18 Brumaire to Tilsit 1799-1807. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1936, pp. 170-171.
- (85) Cited in Prentout, H. - Op. cit., pp. 97-99. The law of 20 May, 1802 had four articles, the first three, cited above, dealt with slavery and the slave trade, the fourth, with colonial government. The intention was to draft a colonial code, but as time and experience were needed for this, and as, at the same time, it was necessary to subordinate local interests to metropolitan ones, the colonial assemblies were suspended. Article 4 stated: "Nonobstant toutes lois antérieures, le régime des Colonies est soumis, pendant dix ans, aux règlements qui seront faits par le gouvernement." (Le Duc, Saint-Elme -Op. cit. p. 450)
- (86) Napal, D. Les Constitutions... - Op. cit., pp. 5, 6.  
Prentout, H. - Op. cit., p. 122.

(87) Letter of Decrès to Decaen dated 22 May, 1803 ( 3 prairial, An XI) cited in Prentout, H. - Op.cit. , p. 121.

(88) Ibid, pp. 122-3, 143.

Le Duc, Saint-Elme - Op.cit. , p. 409.

(89) Davis, D.B. - Op.cit. , p. 76.

(90) Ibid, pp. 74-75.

(91) Ibid, p. 274.

(92) cf. Noël, K. - Op.cit. , passim.

(93) Prentout, H. - Op.cit. , pp. 129-131.

(94) Ibid, pp. 132-133.

(95) cf. Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , p. 759, Table 2, n.2.

(96) Prentout, H. - Op.cit. , p. 140. , n.1.

(97) Ibid, pp. 137-138.

(98) Ibid, pp. 138-139.

(99) The Constituent Assembly, by a decree of 15<sup>th</sup> May, 1791, extended the franchise to all libres, born of free parents, who otherwise fulfilled electoral qualifications. This decree was adopted by île de France's Colonial Assembly on 8 September, 1791. Only a small number of 'libres' were affected by this. Racial barriers were lowered during this period, but they were not removed altogether.

For instance, the separate civil registers for whites and libres, of the ancien régime, were retained during the 1790's, but whereas whites had formerly been referred to as 'sieurs' and the libres as 'nommés', they now became known as 'citoyens' and 'citoyens de couleur' respectively.

cf. Toussaint, A. Port-Louis,... - Op.cit. , p. 162; Le Duc, Saint-Elme Op.cit. , p. 449; Lokke ,C.L. - Op.cit. , pp. 138-140.

On the extension of political rights to the libres during the 1790's

cf. 'Motifs ....' in Message du Directoire Exécutif... - Op.cit. , pp.36-37

Bourde de La Rogerie, H. - Op.cit. , p. 338.

Prentout, H. - Op.cit. , pp. 81, 142.

(100) cf. Chapter 3 , 2 above.

(101) Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit. , II, p. 233 bis. , Tableau 1.

Toussaint, A. 'Le Domaine de Bénarès...' - Op.cit. , pp. 45-46.

(102) Noël, K. - Op.cit. , pp. 308-309. Noël is referring to V. Schoelcher Des Colonies Françaises, Paris, 1842.

- (103) cited in Adolphe, H. Les Archives Démographiques de l'Île Maurice: Registres Paroissiaux et d'Etat Civil 1721-1810, Imprimerie Commerciale Port Louis, 1966, p. 15. n.2.  
Prentout, H. - Op.cit. , p. 142.
- (104) Ibid, p. 140.  
Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit. , II, p. 233 bis. Tableau I.
- (105) cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit. , p. 212.
- (106) cf. Chapter 3 ,3 above.  
'Arrivages à l'Île de France depuis la Paix d'Amiens jusqu'à la Conquête' Rev. Ret. Maur. vol V, 1 (Jan., 1954) p. 54.
- (107) Ibid, vol III, 4 (Jul, 1952) pp. 221-224.  
Ibid, vol.III,4 (Jul, 1952) p 223
- (108) cf. Davis, D.B. - Op.cit. , p. 307.  
P. Masson in Patterns of Dominance, Oxford University Press, London, 1971, pp. 87-92, points to the complexity of social attitudes to sexual unions between different racial groups. He says that four basic relationships have to be distinguished, namely, "marriage across a group frontier, long-standing concubinage, temporary exploitation, and the position of the offspring". In Île de France during the period of Napoleonic rule, marriages were not illegal, but were officially discouraged. (cf. Prentout, H. - Op.cit. , p. 142), concubinage over long periods was condoned; temporary sexual exploitation was probably tolerated, but evidence on this is meagre. As for the position of the offspring it was ambiguous. Official policy was directed at keeping the offspring in the lower status group, but in practice they tended to occupy an intermediate social position, between the dominant and subordinate groups.
- (109) Ibid, pp. 130-132.
- (110) cf. Chapter 3, 2 and note (99) above.
- (111) 'Motifs...' in Message du Directoire Exécutif... - Op.cit. , pp. 28-29.
- (112) Descroizilles cited in Filliot, J.M. - Op.cit. , p. 69.  
cf. Adam, H. Modernizing Racial Discrimination: The Dynamics of South African Politics, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971  
Adam says that : "One deals only with epiphenomena so long as racialism is analysed in isolation from political economy ... racialism is an expression of specific interests... instead of reifying cultural heterogeneity as a quasi-natural state of affairs ethnic identifications should

be seen as the result of efforts by under privileged groups to improve their lot through collective mobilisation or, conversely the efforts of a super ordinate group to preserve the privileges they enjoy by exploiting subjected groups". (pp. 20,22).

CHAPTER 4.

The Making of a Sugar Colony

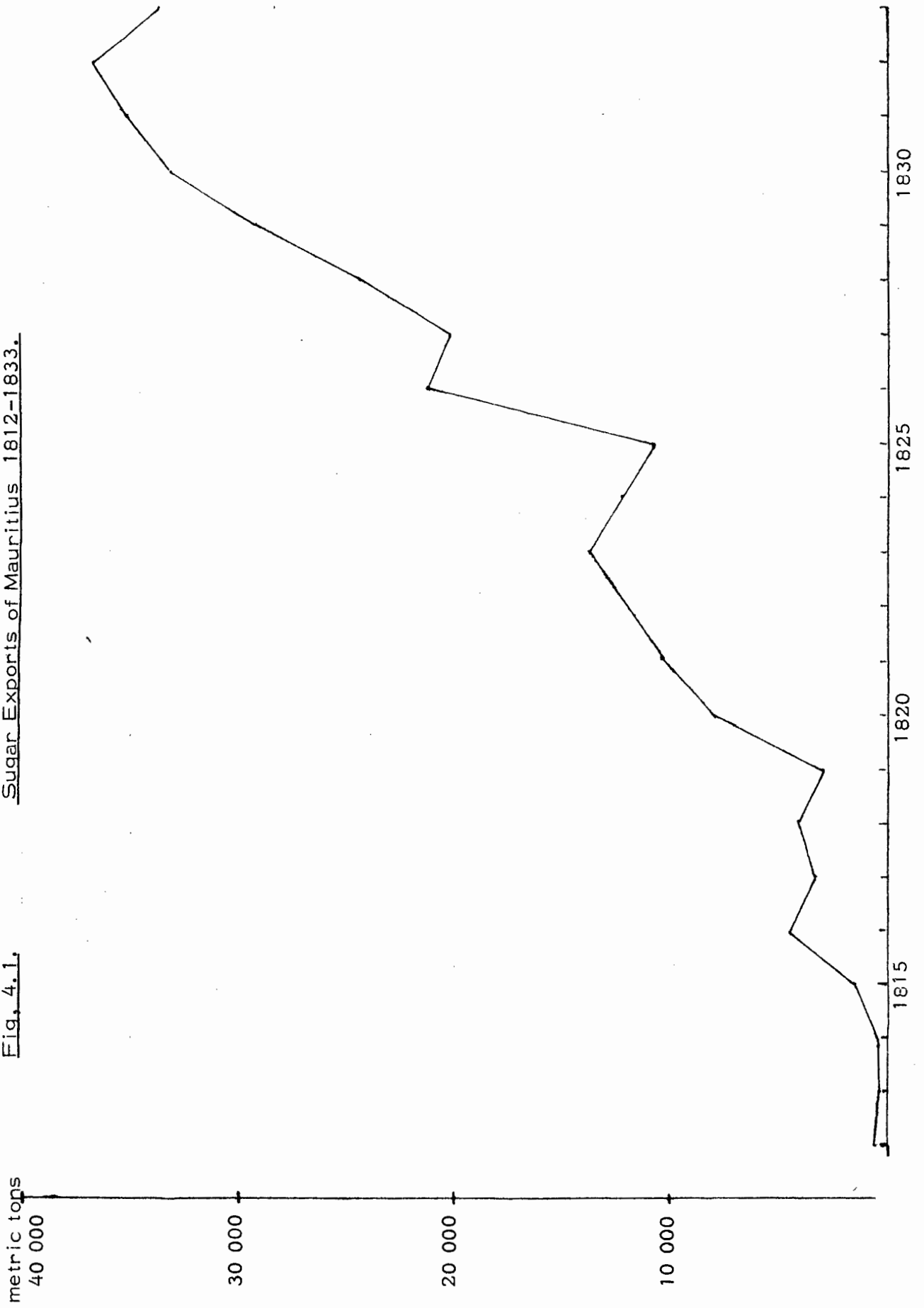
1810 - 1833.

In the three decades after the British conquest of 1810, Mauritius was transformed into Britain's premier sugar colony. Already in the 1790's there were indications that sugar would become the island's major staple, as local planters were lured to the cultivation of sugar-cane by the market opportunities, real or imagined, raised by Saint-Domingue's demise as Europe's chief supplier of tropical products, and as a result of the collapse of the Mauritian indigo industry. There were setbacks in the first decade of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, largely because of overspeculation and war, but the return of peace gave a new lease of life to the nascent sugar industry. (1) Within two years of the conquest Mauritius was exporting 484 metric tons of sugar. (2) This was only 12% of the peak output of nearly 4 000 metric tons reached in 1803, under French rule, but this peak was bettered in 1816. Output declined and the industry stagnated from 1817 to 1819 because of natural calamities, namely the Port Louis fire of 1816, which ruined the capital's merchant class and brought trade to a standstill, and the devastating cyclones of 1818 and 1819, but in 1820 the expansion was resumed. At the end of that year sugar exports totalled 7 485 metric tons. They rose to 13 211 metric tons in 1823 and to 38 483 metric tons in 1832. On the eve of slave emancipation, in 1833, Mauritius was only second to Jamaica and British Guiana as a sugar producer. Seven years later, the colony which had been described as a 'warehouse of samples' by James Prior at the conquest, had surpassed both Jamaica and British Guiana in importance, as indicated in Table 4, 1., below. (3) cf. Fig, 4, 1.

TABLE 4, 1. Sugar Production of Mauritius, Jamaica and British Guiana 1812, 1833 and 1840 in metric tons. (4)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Mauritius</u>	<u>Jamaica</u>	<u>British Guiana</u>
1812	484	63 096	12 410 (1814)
1833	33 742	68 939	55 464
1840	41 024	26 878	36 191

Fig. 4.1. Sugar Exports of Mauritius 1812-1833.



The lead was briefly regained by Jamaica in the early 1840's, but that colony experienced a steady decline in sugar production thereafter. In 1860, when Mauritian sugar production reached a peak, not equalled until 1877, of 134 048 metric tons, the Jamaican output had fallen to 26 058 metric tons. (4)

How can this remarkable performance be accounted for? In this chapter we will examine some of the main factors responsible for the expansion of the Mauritian sugar industry until 1833. That is, we will examine the roles played by climate, land, soil fertility, markets, capital, labour and technology in this process.

Mauritius has been well endowed by nature for the growing of sugar. The island has a climate characterised by warm wet summers and mild winters. Rainfall is adequate for sugar-cane cultivation. (5) As mentioned in the introduction, it was apparent to contemporary observers as early as the 18<sup>th</sup> century that reckless deforestation, especially of hilltops and water courses, had an adverse effect on rainfall and altered the drainage pattern. This means that the suitability of various districts for agriculture has varied over time. (6) However towards the close of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, planters were attempting to retain moisture in the soil by spreading a layer of cane straw on the surface, between the cane holes. (7) They also knew that the volcanic boulders that were scattered in many fields had the same effect, and did not displace them when sowing the crops, if at all possible. (8)

Soil fertility was a crucial variable in the history of the world sugar industry before the age of artificial fertilizers. Thus the history of sugar expansion in the Caribbean before the mid-nineteenth century can be told largely in terms of movements from old exhausted plantations to virgin land. (9) Although Mauritius was a small island, only 1 852 km<sup>2</sup> in extent, there was adequate uncultivated land to meet the demands of agriculture. While the number of plantations had risen steadily since the time of Labourdonnais, not one fifth of the island was cultivated in 1808. (10) Planters seeking new land were initially obliged to settle near the coast for easy access to the Port Louis market by sea. In 1817 however, work was started on a trans-island road that was to link Port Louis and Mahébourg. With the aid of Indian convicts, this excellent macadamized route was

completed in 1832. It opened up the interior to potential settlement and revolutionised transportation by permitting the substitution of animal-drawn wheeled transport for human carriers. (11) No less an authority than Charles Darwin, who called at Mauritius on the Beagle in April-May 1836, believed that : "one great cause of this prosperity is due to the excellent roads and means of communication throughout the island. At the present day in the neighbouring Isle of Bourbon, which remains under the French government, the roads are in the same miserable state, as they were a few years past in this place. The Macadamising art has, perhaps, been of greater advantage to the colonies, than to the mother country." (12)

However, at least until 1840, improvements in the road network had a negligible impact on settlement. Transportation was facilitated and presumably cheapened, but the interior remained relatively unoccupied. The rapid increase in the area under cane, from 4 934 hectares in 1817 to 28 101 hectares in 1840, was achieved, not by bringing virgin land into cultivation, but by a change in the crop mix : by a shift from mixed farming to monoculture. This can be clearly seen from Table 4,2.

TABLE 4, 2. Land Utilisation in Cultivated Area from 1817 to 1840, in hectares, (13)

<u>Year</u>	<u>Provision Crops</u> (manioc excl.)	<u>Staple Crops</u> (sugar incl.)	<u>Sugar</u>	<u>Total Cultivated Area</u> (manioc excl.)
1817	24 362	9 012	4 934	33 374
1825	18 932	13 381	11 666	32 313
1829	8 078	21 990	21 526	30 068
1840	4 023	28 276	28 101	32 299

From about 1840 onwards however, the expansion of sugar cultivation that proceeded apace until 1860, necessitated the creation of

new estates, as all land that had previously been cultivated, had been converted to sugar-growing. (14) The possibility of growing crops for three decades or more on the same soil, reflected that soil's natural fertility. When the 'Bengal Civilian' visited planter, May, of Palma, on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1835, he was shown a plot of land which had been under cane for 50 consecutive years. He said : " if the appearance of the crop was not so floridly exuberant as in some other plantations, still there were no symptoms of exhaustion, or even delicacy, so vast are the resources of this volcanic soil". (15)

In the introduction, the natural fertility of the island's volcanic soils was mentioned. Since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, sugar planters tried to maintain or raise this fertility by the application of animal manure, mixed with cane tops or cane straw. However the limited number of livestock in the colony precluded this practice from becoming general. (16) A more widespread method of fertilising the soil was that of burning cane straw on the ground after the cane had been harvested. Less common, was the technique of burying vegetable matter into the earth before planting. A handful of planters tried to enrich the soil by growing manioc and a variety of peas in rotation with sugar cane, for periods ranging between one and three years. (17) These methods of *brulis*, *enfouissements* and *assolements*, and the practice of manuring, remained the principal ones until the decade of the 1840's. At that time Mauritian planters started to import fertilizers from abroad, namely Peruvian guano and nitrate of potash from India. The use of guano became widespread by 1850. Its first importation in 1843 came soon after the Otaheite cane variety, grown in the island for the previous sixty years, was attacked by the 'maladie blanche' or root disease : "to which the Otaheite is so susceptible as lands become old and compacted." (18)

Not all geographical factors were favourable to the development of Mauritian agriculture. Summer heat and humidity allowed crops to grow and ripen, but the warm season was also that of cyclones, which intermittently struck the island, often with destructive force. (19) The shift to sugar-growing was accentuated by the devastating hurricanes of March 1818, January and March 1819, and April 1824, as sugar-cane withstood the cyclonic assaults much better than the other staple crops. Charles Telfair, who owned

several sugar plantations, later recollected : "My neighbour in the Savanne, Mr. Etienne Bolgerd , went over his grounds with me, in November 1817; at a moderate calculation, his crop of cloves, then about to be collected, was expected to exceed 70,000lbs . . . . The hurricane of March 1818 not only destroyed nearly the whole crop; but did such injury to the trees that they never recovered; and thus fifteen years of life, in which Mr. Bolgerd had been forming his plantations, were lost." Telfair added that the cultivation of indigo , nutmegs, coffee and cotton was "not less objectionable than that of cloves".(20)

This peculiar suitability of sugar-cane to the Mauritian agro-climatic environment partly explains the shift to sugar cultivation, from food crops and other staple products, that took place before 1825, even though the island's sugar was then at a fiscal disadvantage on the British market. (21) In 1817 provision crops covered 73% of the cultivated area under crops, staple crops only 27%. By 1825 their respective proportions were 59% and 41%, the total cultivated area remaining practically constant. The shift to sugar within the staple crop section, is shown in Table 4, 3., below.

TABLE 4, 3. Land Utilisation in Cultivated Area under Staple Crops  
1817, 1825 and 1829.

Year	Sugar	Cotton	Coffee	Indigo	Cloves	Total Area under Staple Crops in hectares.
1817	54,7 %	26,4 %	11,5 %	1,8 %	5,6 %	4 934
1825	87,2 %	3,3 %	3,9 %	0,8 %	4,8 %	11 666
1829	97,9 %	0,01 %	1,0 %	-	1,1 %	21 526

The entry of Mauritian sugar into Great-Britain was initially subject to the same restrictions as those applying to the Bengal product. When the East India Compagny's charter was renewed in 1813 and its

monopoly of Indian commerce was abolished, the powerful West Indian lobby secured the imposition of a differential duty of 10 s per cwt. on sugar exports from the Company's area of jurisdiction. This meant that Mauritian sugar was effectively kept out of the British market. (23) Since the low returns earned barely covered the costs of production, John Wheatley, a political economist, who had visited Telfair's estates, felt that the duty was injurious to the colonists. He added : "Almost every planter is more or less indebted to his merchant, and as the consignment now sell, from the diminution of the currency, for little more than enough to pay the island charges and the interest of their debts, the planters have scarcely sufficient for the ordinary expenses of life". (24)

Mauritian sugar could not be exported profitably to France, the colony's second largest trading partner, because that country followed a protectionist policy designed to nurture her infant sugar-beet industry. In 1821 foreign-grown sugar imported into France paid a tax of 90 francs per 100 kgs, or nearly, twice that levied on imports of sugar grown in the French colonies. Moreover, sugar leaving Mauritius, for foreign markets, was subject to a high levy at the point of exportation. Uncertain marketing prospects retarded the expansion of sugar-cultivation in Mauritius. (25)

The decision to admit Mauritian sugar into Great Britain, on the same terms as West Indian sugar, was taken by the British government, largely in response to the colony's particular circumstances; but it came after several years of heated debate on the question of West Indian monopoly, which pitted Calcutta merchants, textile manufacturers and traders from Manchester, ex-officials of the East Indian Company and slave abolitionists, against the West Indian faction in the British Parliament. (26)

After the Caribbean colonies were permitted to export their sugar directly to Europe and the New World, in terms of the West Indies and American Trade Act, and of the Colonial Trade Act of 1822, the East Indians demanded parallel concessions. In particular they called for the equalisation of duties on East and West Indian sugar. (27) Their champion in the House of Commons, Thomas Whitmore, called for the appointment of a select committee into the question in March 1823, but his motion was turned down by a large majority. The government's stand point was spelt out by

William Huskisson, President of the Board of Trade. Huskisson claimed that such a committee would more likely concern itself with "the fearful and delicate question of negro slavery" than with that of preferential duties. (28) Indeed, the attack on the West Indian monopoly was on moral, as well as on economic, grounds. Free-grown sugar, as most East Indian sugar was, was cheaper than the slave-grown product of the West Indies, but the latter was being subsidised by the wretched working-classes who should be relieved from that burden, it was argued. (29)

The controversy surrounding the question of working-class living standards during the industrial revolution lies beyond the scope of this work, but it must be pointed out that statistics of tea, sugar and coffee consumption per capita, between 1800 and 1845, do not support an 'optimist' view. Hard times and high prices to the consumer, as a result of the retention of high war-time duties on West Indian sugar, and the imposition of even higher differential duties to keep out the cheaper East Indian and foreign product, led to a steady decline in the consumption of sugar in Britain, excluding Ireland, from 13,9 kgs per person in 1801 to 8,7 kgs in 1830, and to a low point of 6,9 kgs in 1840. By 1845 sugar consumption had recovered but only to 9,2 kgs per capita. (30) Even the unreformed Parliament must have been sensitive to such developments, and the concessions extended to Mauritius in 1825 may be seen partly, as an attempt to increase sugar production within the Empire, and to reduce the selling price of sugar at home, thus allowing the working-class the possibility of "mixing one drop of sweet in the bitter cup which they were bound to drink". (31)

The differential duties, designed to keep out foreign and East Indian sugar and to give West Indian producers a monopoly of the British market, failed in their purpose. This was pointed out by David Ricardo, in 1822, who claimed that West Indian protection was illusory. Its only effect he said, was to guarantee "a large but unenumerative sale". (32) This was because more sugar was produced within the West Indian monopoly, than was consumed in England. A substantial amount of colonial sugar therefore had to be re-exported to the Continent, where it had to compete with cheap Brazilian and Cuban sugar. This had a depressing effect on prices obtained by West Indian producers at home. (33)

The paradoxical increase in West Indian sugar production in the face of falling prices can be understood, if a distinction is made between the

old sugar islands, such as Jamaica and the Leeward islands, and the newly acquired colonies of Berbice, Demerara and Trinidad. It was the former group of high-cost producers which the protectionist policy had intended to benefit. The policy failed however, because of the increase in sugar production in the conquered islands, which were blessed with vast expanses of virgin land. (34)

Thus, while the problem of declining profits which plagued the West Indian 'nabobs' was not solved by the imposition of differential duties, the British public was denied the benefit of cheaper East Indian and foreign sugar. Because of the importance of sugar duties to the Exchequer, the British government could not consider scrapping them altogether to secure a reduction in sugar prices to the consumer. (35) On the other hand, the system of discriminatory duties could not be maintained for long under the pressure of hostile public opinion. The first breach in this system was made in 1825. Its timing can be explained with reference to developments in Mauritius.

As sugar-cultivation expanded in Mauritius, the question of a market assumed increasing significance. From 1817 to 1824 Mauritian planters and traders submitted five petitions to the British government that called for the abolition of the excess 10 s duty. Governor R. T. Farquhar, on leave in England from 1818 to 1820, took up their case in person, but with no immediate results. Farquhar took up the cudgel once more on behalf of Mauritian planters in 1823; when he left the colony for good. He had been preceded to England by James Saunders, a wealthy British trader who had settled in Mauritius and who had been a member of the Council of Commune of Port-Louis, which was a nominated body with the task of advising the governor on matters of local government and on which several prominent colonists served. (36) On the 21<sup>st</sup> May, Saunders had an interview with Lord Bathurst, Secretary of State for colonies, where he put forward the colonists' requests for fiscal parity with the West Indies and submitted a memorandum on the subject. (37) There was again no immediate reaction from Bathurst. However the new governor, Sir Lowry Cole (1823-1828) did not let the matter rest. In a series of despatches to the Secretary of State, Cole put a convincing case for the equalisation of duties on Mauritian and West Indian sugar. (38) Cole pointed out that the island's

economy was precarious and that the balance of trade had been unfavourable in 1823. There were signs that the imbalance in the external accounts would worsen in 1824, as the crops had been devastated by hurricanes and emergency food supplies had to be imported from abroad. The governor believed that the island had a promising future as a sugar colony and felt that it should be encouraged to develop in that direction. Just concessions to the French-speaking colonists would moreover have the effect of strengthening their loyalty to England. (39)

The Colonial office was swayed by these representations. It submitted the case to the Board of Trade for consideration and, on 15<sup>th</sup> May 1824, William Huskisson introduced a motion in the Commons for the equalisation of duties on Mauritian and West Indian sugar. (40) There ensued a protracted debate between the government and the West Indian lobby, which was duplicated, after some months delay, in the colony between the partisans of the 'ancien négoce' and the sugar planters and their merchant allies. (41) To placate West Indian opposition, the Colonial Trade Act of 1825, which extended the fiscal concessions to Mauritius, also revoked that island's free trade privileges, which she had enjoyed since the decree of 27 May 1787. At the same time, as Hunt points out, a measure was enacted which restricted the ownership and mastership of British vessels to British citizens. Naturalisation was an expensive process and the legislation must have severely hurt the French merchants, established in the capital since 1810, with funds invested in locally registered vessels. (42) It undoubtedly militated against the immigration of further foreign traders and opened the way for the arrival of British merchants.

Although these laws were only received in Mauritius at the beginning of 1827, the colonists had knowledge of them in letters received from London on the 4<sup>th</sup> August 1825. Governor Lowry Cole was informed of these developments by a letter from his predecessor, R.T. Farquhar, on 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1825. (43) The planters were immediately electrified into action. The acreage under cane doubled from 1825 to 1830, the output of sugar tripled. (44)

Eric Williams wrote that : "sugar was and is essentially a capitalist undertaking, involving not only agricultural operations but the crude stages of refining as well. A report on the French sugar islands stated that

to make ten hogsheads of sugar required as great an expenditure in beasts of burden, mills and utensils as to make a hundred."(45) Indeed plantations tended to be large because of the economies of scale characterising sugar production, since the larger the area cultivated in cane, the lower would be the fixed costs of producing one ton of sugar. In Jamaica, Trinidad and Guiana, sugar estates averaged 364 hectares in area; in Barbados, some 120 hectares.(46) In Mauritius too sugar plantations were extensive, averaging about 226 hectares in 1831-4 ( cf. Appendix )(47)

The establishment of a sugar estate necessitated ample supplies of capital. Funds were needed for the purchase and clearing of land, the erection of buildings, the importation and installation of plant and machinery and the acquisition of slaves, livestock and agricultural implements.(48) These capital requirements steadily increased, during the period under examination, as sugar technology became wedded to steam. Until 1823 sugar-mills in Mauritius were mainly driven by water or animal power, but twenty years later, nearly seventy per cent of them were steam-powered, most of the remainder being water-driven. This transformation is depicted in Table 4, 4., below.(49)

TABLE 4, 4.                      Sugar-mills in Mauritius 1823 - 1843

Year	<u>Mill Powered by</u>			Total
	<u>Steam</u>	<u>Water</u>	<u>Animals</u>	
1823	7	88	62	157
1828	51	105	20	176
1833	69	87	11	167
1838	130	66	7	203
1843	158	65	5	228

The earlier cattle-driven mills were normally found on plantations where as little as 5 hectares, and seldom more than 35 hectares were under cane. These 'moulins à manège' were housed in simple circular or octogonal buildings with thatched roofs.(50) Major General R. Darling, who administered

the colony during part of governor R. T. Farquhar's absence, or from February 1819 to July 1820, authorised the entry of British machinery into the island, duty-free, if carried in British bottoms. (51) This was followed by the introduction of the first steam engine by A. d'Epina y in 1822. (52) The number of steam engines rose to 7 in 1823, to 69 in 1833 and to 150 in 1843. (53) Most of them were manufactured in Britain, the most popular makes being the Fawcett, Martineau or Graham engines, which varied in capacity from 3 to 8 horse-power. (54)

Green writes that when steam engines were introduced in the British West Indies c. 1810, the lack of spare parts and adequate repair facilities was a costly and time-consuming handicap. Planters had to resort to skilled machinists, who were scarce and therefore dear. (55) In Mauritius too, improvements in technology called for new skills, and by 1832 it was reported that many engineers were at work in the island. (56)

Steam engines were invariably housed in solid stone or brick and mortar buildings. They also called for an extension of sugar-growing in the plantations. As suggested above, the high cost of the new technology induced an expansion in the area devoted to the growing of sugar. In the period 1831-3 we find steam engines on estates where as many as 211 hectares were under cane, the arithmetic mean for twenty-one such estates being 97,8 hectares. (57) It is obvious that even on large estates, the proportion of the land area under sugar-cane would be limited by a number of factors. Some land had to be set aside for the slaves' provision grounds and for the master's garden and orchard. Pasture had to be reserved for cattle, which were used in transportation or as sources of motive power, and thus formed part of the cycle of production. Forests were required to provide timber for use in construction, or as fuel, for both domestic and industrial purposes. Finally the estate's topography also influenced the extent of the cane acreage.

The high cost of sugar-making was due in part to the expense involved in importing and maintaining modern machinery. Telfair paid £1 006 for the horizontal roller mill which he introduced into the colony c. 1819. Adrien d'Epina y reckoned that, from 1826 to 1829, the machinery import bill of the island amounted to £140 058, a sum which covered the cost of "plus de 150 machines à vapeur destinées aux sucreries avec une bonne

quantité de machine de tous genres, roues, alambics, générateurs, etc.etc!" D'Epinaÿ also estimated that in 1830 an estate of an area of 162 hectares, with a labour force of one hundred slaves and a well-kept mill, and situated in the best district of the colony, was worth at least £ 16 000. (58)

The planters did not only need large amounts of fixed capital, they also required operating or circulating capital, such as that required to tide them over from production to sale, to meet every day disbursements; in case of natural disasters, or of unanticipated market fluctuations. (59) How were these two forms of capital requirements met?

Throughout the French century access to cheap land had been granted to Compagnie and royal officials, so much so that many large concessions remained untilled and that many proprietors retired to France instead of labouring on their Mauritian estates. Thus during the eighteenth century île de France, like Jamaica, was characterised by absentee landlords and idle latifundia. (60) Although, from the time of the French Revolution onwards, resident planters predominated in the island, the tradition of free land to the chosen few appears to have been maintained, at least until the first decade of the British occupation. Thus Charles Telfair obtained generous land concessions from governor R. T. Farquhar and, reportedly, used some islands that had been conceded to him in the Seychelles group, as security to borrow public funds.

Government officials, many of whom owned estates and slaves, were also able to raise public loans at half the market interest rate, either to improve or augment their possessions, or for re-lending at profitable rates. These irregularities persisted until the appointment of Major-General Gage John Hall, as acting-governor, on Farquhar's departure to England in November, 1817. This 'new broom' removed several corrupt officials from their posts, but was himself replaced in December, 1818, for having been: "injudicious in dealing with abuses." (61)

In this way public monies and political favours could be used to meet both the fixed and circulating capital needs of private agriculture. However, less irregular sources of finance had to be tapped if the sugar industry was to expand further.

Mercantile capital had been available during the industry's cradle

days, either in the form of loans, or as merchants invested directly in landed property. (62) Credit had been especially easy in the inflationary 1790's when the fruits of plunder had also facilitated the accumulation of capital. (63) The equalisation of Mauritian with West Indian sugar duties in 1825, and the sugar boom that ensued, attracted a group of British merchant capitalists to the new colony. They were to provide much of the short-term finance required for the sugar industry's development. (64)

Participation in the lucrative sugar trade sometimes took the form of traders themselves purchasing the planters' crop, but more frequently the former acted as brokers, or intermediaries, and handled the shipping, insurance and sale of the product abroad, levying commercial charges in return. (65) The smooth operation of this system of brokerage rested partly on the willingness of the agents to make advances to their principals in anticipation of final sale. Merchants were not unwilling to broaden this financial relationship to embrace the extension of short-term loans to their clients. When James Blyth arrived in Mauritius, in 1830, he spoke of "all business being transacted upon bills, and almost all the French families purchasing even fowls or a quarter of mutton with bills at six months". (66) Hall had noted that money could be lent at the legal colonial interest of 9%, or at the market rate of 15-20%. (67) Indeed, as Lamusse argued, such high returns made money-lending attractive and "generated a special psychology of credit among all classes of the community". (68)

The Reverend Patrick Beaton who visited Mauritius in 1858, gave an interesting description of the system of brokerage, as it then operated. He wrote : " when a planter has sugar to dispose of, he sends a specimen to his broker in Port Louis, who submits it to the inspection of the different merchants, and sells it at the current price. These brokers form a very flourishing community; and as they generally dabble a little in bills, and are not averse to usury, the most of them are comparatively wealthy. If there should be no demand for sugar or if the broker thinks that a rise will soon take place, the sugar is stowed away in large stores built for the purpose near the harbour. The planter may be in want of money, and to raise the sum which he requires he has recourse to what are called dock-warrants. He obtains a document signed by the keeper of the store to the effect that he has so much sugar in his keeping, and through this document he tries to raise the money." (69)

Circulating capital was also provided by private banks. The first of these, established in 1813, was the 'Banque de Maurice, Bourbon et Dépendances'. Its Act of Association, which was approved by governor Farquhar on 2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1813, empowered it to issue paper money redeemable on demand in specie. The bank's 'Conseil d'Administration' set the volume of note issue in accordance with : "les besoins de la place, pour la facilité des affaires, l'avantage et la sûreté de la banque." (70) The bank ran into difficulties within a few years. It is said to have been ruined as a result of the Port Louis fire which destroyed the capital's business area in 1816. An unjudicious use of the power of unrestricted note issue may also have contributed to the bank's downfall however, but evidence on this point is lacking. (71)

The 'Banque de Maurice' was liquidated in 1824. Two years later a project for setting up a second bank was initiated as "le besoin de capitaux pour développer l'industrie sucrière se fit sentir". (72) Nothing came of this plan, or of a second project, initiated in 1830, to raise a mortgage loan in Britain for setting up a bank in Mauritius. During his stay in England in 1831, Adrien d'Epinay revived this scheme. He obtained a loan of £200 000 from a private banker, but wrote that the interest charges of 8% per annum seemed too high and that he would try to get one on better terms. On the 17<sup>th</sup> April, of that year, he announced that he had successfully negotiated a loan, which presumably bore a lower interest rate. In October 1831, shares were issued to the Mauritian public and, within three months, a sum of half a million piastres had been subscribed. This second 'Banque de Maurice' was a far cry from its namesake set up nearly two decades earlier. In 1813 a share capital of only 200 000 piastres had been raised, chiefly, if not solely, from local sources. (73) In 1838 the Mauritius Commercial Bank was set up by the English trader, James Blyth. Planters and traders, Englishmen and Mauritians, featured amongst the shareholders of both these institutions. Both had the privilege of unlimited note issue, which lasted as long as the banks' charters, which in the case of the Commercial Bank was for a period of twenty years. (74)

The creation of private banking institutions filled a gap in the Mauritian credit structure and aided the development of the sugar industry. However, misuse of the unrestricted power of note issue gave birth to an era of unrestricted credit and inflationary financing, which led the colony into depression in the 1840's. From the vantage of 1848, governor Sir Maynard

Gomm drew the secretary of state's attention to the "uniform maladministration of the colonial banks from the date of their formation up to that of . . . . their self extinction". He added "on no spot on earth has the abuse of paper-issue been more unscrupulously indulged in by private parties than by the banks of Mauritius." (75)

With merchants and bankers both lending short, the planters raised the funds required for productive investments from their relatives and associates. A comment of Peter Mathias on the industrialisation of Britain may be judiciously used in the Mauritian context. Mathias wrote that :

"Eighteenth-century business flourished as a face-to-face society of friends, cousins and business associates. This world of personal contact by kinship and friendship was often the first resource for cash". (76)

The first sugar-mill erected by the French in the 1740's, was the undertaking of a partnership consisting of governor Labourdonnais, his cousin Athanase Ribetrière and Jacques Latour. Governor Magon ran his La Retraite estate in association with his neighbours, Lepage and Bezac; and Charles Telfair's model Bel Ombre plantation belonged in part to his friends in government service, Bebe Lesage and Major William George Waugh. (77) When Charles Anglade was forced to sell his Belle Vue estate in 1838, it was purchased by the four Harel brothers, who had formed the Société Harel Frères, as a convenient vehicle for pooling family resources and for preserving family wealth. (78)

Another device for raising long-term finance was the mortgage loan, which was granted against the security of an estate, and which normally carried a fixed interest charge. So long as the sugar market was buoyant, planters had little difficulty in raising such loans and in meeting interest payments. However, opportunities for speculative gains were many, and bullish behaviour was common. When Jacques Nicolas de Forancis bought the Beau Champ sugar estate in 1782 he only paid 7 000 livres tournois down, on the total price of 650 000 livres. Some time later he offered this property as a guarantee for a loan of 400 000 livres which he attempted to raise from the Crown. (79) The 'Bengal Civilian', endeavouring "to place the creole character in a fair point of view", deplored the readiness of Mauritian planters to defraud their creditors. He reported that the same property was

often mortgaged independently to various capitalists, who were unable to recover their claims from the insolvent borrowers, who had accumulated encumbrances on the same property. (80) When planters were unable to meet interest charges, their creditors foreclosed. Since foreclosure normally took place in times of depression when land values were low, it was often impossible to recover loans granted against optimistically valued property, and this led many creditors to take over the management of the estates until the return of prosperity. This changed the structure of ownership in Mauritius and reintroduced the absentee landlord, since few money-lenders were prepared to become resident proprietors. (81)

Many of these new owners were English sugar-brokers, who came into possession of Mauritian plantations during the depressed 1831-1834, 1840-1843 and 1847-1848 periods, especially. Thus Arbuthnot & Co. bought Belle Alliance in 1832, James Blyth purchased Bon Accueil in 1835, Petit Bois was purchased by Hunter & Arbuthnot in 1834 and Chapman & Barclay & Barclay Bros. acquired the plantations of Queen Victoria, Circonstance, Bon Espoir and Solitude between 1840 and 1845. (82) By 1847 the London firm of Reid Irving & Co. had invested £ 540 000 in twenty-three estates. (83) This inflow of British Capital bolstered the growth of the Mauritian sugar industry but its long-term influence on the island's social and economic structure was perhaps less than favourable, as it reinforced the shift towards sugar monoculture, and entrenched the economic and social dominance of a small minority of planters and merchant capitalists. (84)

The respective contributions of labour and technology to the success of the Mauritian sugar industry formed the centre of a debate between Mauritian planters and their opponents. The latter argued that Mauritian prosperity was attributable to continued slave importations into the island. Slave smuggling on a vast scale was reflected in "the late progressive increase in sugar cultivation in the Mauritius, a cultivation generally held to be not only more destructive to human life than any other but requiring a greater number of hands to carry it on." (85)

This was denied in a memorandum from the 'Chambre de Commerce de Maurice' in a letter to Governor Charles Colville, dated 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1829. The memorandum read : "Les causes de cette prospérité sont due principalement à la confection des routes, à l'introduction des machines

à vapeur, à celle des animaux de trait, et, nous le disons aussi, à l'amélioration du sort des esclaves; amélioration dont les colons s'étaient occupés, tant par humanité que par intérêt avant même que la Métropole aît voulu leur en faire un devoir. "(86)

The planters' most able defender was undoubtedly Charles Telfair. In 1830 Telfair, who owned several sugar plantations, published Some Account of the State of Slavery at Mauritius, since the British Occupation in 1810, in which he refuted the charges of 'immense importations' which had been directed against the colony in the Anti Slavery Monthly Reporter.

Telfair claimed that insular prosperity was "to be attributed solely to our having called into action the intelligence of man, in preference to his merely physical powers ... indeed nine-tenths of human labour have been replaced by eighty steam-engines and sugar-mills, by implements of agriculture of all kinds, and by beasts of burden of which not less than 30 000 have been imported within five years, and nearly 11 000 since January". (87)

Technological improvements may have played some part in fostering the growth of the sugar-industry, but, as will be argued below, not to the extent claimed by Telfair.

His estimates of the number of steam-engines employed in the sugar industry are reasonably accurate. There were only 69 steam-driven mills in Mauritius in 1833, but some sugar-mills may have had more than one steam-engine in use. (88) However it is unlikely, as Telfair put it at the time, that 'nine-tenths of human labour have been replaced by eighty steam engines.' Steam engines may have released cattle and manpower from the crushing process, where mills were not previously driven by water, but firewood, cane straw or bagasse now had to be gathered as fuel for the boilers. Moreover, the crushing capacity of the mills was increased, with the result that sugar-cane cultivation had to be extended. As the Reporter pointed out this crop required far more labour than other plantation crops. (89)

Given the paucity of data no exact measure of the sugar planters' labour requirements is available, but evidence from other sugar-growing countries suggests that they must have been appreciably greater than those of

cultivators growing other tropical staples. Referring to the Caribbean Eric Williams wrote : "sugar required three times the number of Negroes and livestock needed on a plantation producing crops other than sugar. For sugar cultivation one slave was required for every two acres, as compared with one slave to from five to ten acres of cotton, and one slave to thirty or forty acres of corn".(90)

The Palma estate, with 253 hectares under cane, had 350 slaves and 300 head of cattle, while the Saint-Aubin plantation, where indigo was grown, and which had an area of 332 hectares under cultivation, had only 77 slaves and a livestock herd, but 148 strong.(91) The census of 1815 shows that the fifteen sugar estates, then in the Savanne district, held nearly five times more slaves, on average, than the thirty-eight remaining plantations, where crops other than sugar were grown.(92)

A historian of British slavery has described the sugar economy as marked by "alternating crises of over and under employment."(93) This feature was the product of two special sets of circumstances. The first was the seasonal nature of sugar planting, which meant that, unlike other crops or polycultural systems where year-round work was available, labour activities were heavily concentrated in the crop season. The second was the institution of slavery itself, which decreed that idleness undermined the social order, and that slaves had to kept busy during the off-crop. Sugar planters could not lay off their slaves in the same way that British industrialists laid off their workers.(94) Accordingly, they opted for labour-using technology : in Mauritius, as in the West Indies, the hand-hoe reigned supreme and the animal-drawn plough was seldom encountered. When Charles Telfair introduced a plough on his Bel Ombre estate in 1818, his slaves found the contraption so unusual that they named it 'pioche de boeuf' or bullock's hoe.(95)

As late as 1852 the writer of a treatise on sugar cultivation wrote that canes were planted in individually-dug holes. He added : "Dans les terres franches, on a essayé de faire usage de la charrue : je ne puis pas dire avoir constaté le succès de ce système ... mais en général il y a trop peu de terres franches pour permettre l'usage de la charrue; et puis il faudrait pour cela des hommes spéciaux qui manquent dans ce pays".(96)

In the West Indies as well, planters justified their resistance to such a basic innovation as the plough by saying, that the soil was unsuited

to this kind of cultivation, and, that black slaves could not be taught its skills. There is little doubt however that the presence of a large under employed labour force during the long 'dead' season was a powerful motive for not adopting such labour-saving techniques. (97)

Yet this reliance on labour-using technology should not imply agricultural inefficiency. At least one 18<sup>th</sup> century traveller, the astronomer Le Gentil, believed that in île de France "the mode of cultivation is superior to that of Europe. There it (corn) is sown and here it is actually planted." (98) Sugar planters were accused of technological backwardness by their critics, but the plantation system of cultivation, with its accent on human labour, given the circumstances, represented an optimal use of the labour force. (99)

Road-making did revolutionise transportation in Mauritius, but not overnight. The trans-island route to Mahébourg was only completed in 1832. Six years earlier the use of slaves in transportation was apparently still widespread. Lady Bartram then wrote, that although "the English have made roads and introduced horses ... The usual mode of conveyance is by palanquin, as in India, and very comfortable, luxurious conveyances they are : the bearers are never less than four in number, and are sometimes six, eight, or twelve according to the distance they are to travel." (100)

At the end of 1829 traveller James Holman found that the produce of the island's eastern district of Flacq, where more than one-fifth of the island's sugar-cane was cultivated, was still being taken to Port-Louis on men's heads or in small coasting vessels, called 'chasse-marées', on account of their shallow draughts. (101)

The planters also argued that they had built roads on their estates where paths had existed formerly. This may have permitted the use of cattle in the place of slaves for the carriage of commodities within the plantations, but it did not solve the problem of transportation outside the estates. For instance, Telfair wrote that : "Much labour formerly done by slaves, has for a long period been done by cattle especially since the proprietors of estates have formed roads for carts, instead of pathways. Formerly, timber, even of the very largest kind, was conveyed from the forests by mere manual labour, planks being

placed on the heads of the blacks. Sugar-canes were forwarded to the mill in the same way; but the practice for some years has been obsolete".(102)

And while this was probably true within his own Bel Ombre estate and elsewhere, a traveller complained in 1835 that the road to Bel Ombre from the south-west of the island was nothing but a rutted and slippery path : "formidable to any but a Swiss or a chamois".(103)

Table 4, 5. below shows the increase in the livestock population of Mauritius from 1810 to 1832.(104)

TABLE 4, 5. Livestock Population of Mauritius, excluding Goats, Sheep and Pigs, 1810-1832.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Horses</u>	<u>Mules and Asses</u>	<u>Bulls and Cows</u>	<u>Total</u>
1810	445	1 667	11 167	13 279
1817	803	2 692	18 974	22 469
1827	763	2 290	21 913	24 966
1832	748	2 615	24 309	27 672

The population data do not at first sight support Telfair's claims that 30 000 beasts of burden had been imported into the colony in the five years before 1830. The number of horses, mules, asses and cattle increased only by 5 203 units in the fifteen years from 1817 to 1832. Cape-bred horses did not thrive in the Mauritian environment. While it was observed that "the mules and asses employed in the plantations are of a finer order, and, from their hardier constitution, are but slightly affected by the climate", their ranks were seriously reduced by a serious epizootic that lasted from 1822 to 1829.(105) The epizootic also caused high mortality amongst the cattle, and high importations may have been necessary to rebuild the herds. But this in no way supports Telfair's argument that slave muscle had been supplanted by animal power.(106)

As will be shown in Chapter 5, below, there is little doubt that there was fairly extensive slave smuggling into Mauritius until the early 1820's. Thereafter, though illicit slave trading continued, the volume of slave imports seems to have declined sharply. This development created a problem of

labour scarcity, accentuated by the rapid expansion in sugar-cane cultivation which was taking place. An index of this scarcity can be found in d'Unienville's estimates of the total value of property in Mauritius in 1816, 1824 and 1829. D'Unienville assessed the average value of slaves at 140 piastres per head in his first two reckonings. In 1829 however slaves were deemed to be worth 500 piastres each. (107)

Mauritian planters did have access to illegally imported slaves until the early 1820's and this undoubtedly helped keep down labour costs in the colony. However the argument of the Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter, that the expansion of the sugar acreage, after the equalisation of the sugar duties in 1825, was directly due to illicit slave-trading must be discounted. Labour scarcity was a fact of life in Mauritius in the decade that followed, but it was not solved, as Telfair claimed, by a widespread shift to labour-saving techniques. Planters attempted to meet the problem of labour scarcity by carrot-and-stick methods. On the one hand, slaves were motivated to greater effort by means of the system of task-work, whereby tasks were assigned to labourers, and once these had been completed, payment was offered to the slaves who opted to continue working. On the 21<sup>st</sup> June, 1829 Telfair himself wrote to the 'Commissioners of Inquiry into the Question of the Mauritian slave trade', that, "since its benefits have been practically demonstrated, task-work has become almost universal in this island; although thirteen years ago, it was nearly, if not altogether unknown". (108)

On the other hand, not all slave-owners reacted to the problem of labour scarcity by offering rewards and incentives. Many forced their slaves to work longer hours. Telfair insisted that slaves never worked more than eleven hours at Bel Ombre, and that they sometimes worked as little as seven hours. He said that night work was unknown on his estate, except in the boiling-house, where, during crop-time, the process of sugar-making continued through the night, but, such labour was voluntary and rewarded with extra pay. (109) Yet the Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter of January 1829, stated that Mauritian slaves worked "from sixteen to nineteen hours in the day, even out of crop". (110) The slave bell was rung at three o'clock in the morning on Bel Ombre estate, the statement added, and slaves worked almost uninterruptedly until eight o'clock in the evening. (111)

It is clear that the expansion of sugar-cultivation in Mauritius, in the twenty-three years after the British conquest, was the product of a wide range of influences. The lesson to be drawn from the brief review of the slave vs. technology debate above, is that no single factor can be made to carry the weight of explanation for the agricultural expansion that took place. (112)

Nevertheless it is clear that the availability of slave labour was a crucial variable in this expansion. (113)

Notes to Chapter 4.

- (1) cf. Chapter 1,
- (2) Sugar export figures only are available, but given the small local consumption of sugar they are an adequate measure of total production. The data are drawn from Hugoulin, 'L'Industrie sucrière à Maurice' Revue Maritime et Coloniale, Décembre 1862, p. 582 and Deerr, N. - Op. cit. , pp. 203-4.
- (3) cf. Chapter 1, pp.  
Hugoulin Op. cit, p. 582.  
Toussaint, A. Histoire des Iles Mascareignes. Editions Berger-Levrault Paris, 1974, pp. 167,177.
- (4) Deerr, N. - Op. cit. , pp. 193-204
- (5) Barnes, A.C. The Sugar Cane 2nd edition, Leonard Hill Books, London, 1974, pp. 79-80.  
Sornay, P. de La Canne à Sucre à l'île Maurice, Augustin Challamel éditeur, Paris, 1920, p. 63.
- (6) Grant, C. - Op. cit. , p. 36 - P. de Sornay says that Flacq was formerly less watered than the Moka lowlands, but that in 1920 the reverse was true. cf. p. 64.
- (7) Epinay, C. de 'Mémoire sur la Culture et la Manipulation de la Canne à Sucre lu et approuvé par la Société Royale des Arts et des Sciences , le 6 février, 1852.' Imprimerie du 'Commercial Gazette' Port Louis, 1852, p. 10.
- (8) Ibid, pp. 3-4.  
Milbert, M.J. - Op. cit. , I, p. 258.
- (9) Davis, R. - Op. cit. , pp. 252-7.  
Williams, E. From Columbus to Castro, Op. cit. , pp. 124,125.  
Note that this was true of the smaller islands, such as Barbados and Antigua, where sugar cultivation had started in the seventeenth century. Large islands, like Saint-Domingue and Jamaica, had ample land for any future expansion of the cane area. In Jamaica however, vast tracts of alienated land remained uncultivated.
- (10) This was the area cultivated under crops. It excludes the land under forests or pastures. cf. Chapter 1, Table 1,4.
- (11) Lamusse, R. 'The Economic Development. . . . ' - Op. cit. , III Revue

- Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice vol. 43, 4 (Dec. 1964) p. 356  
The blind traveller Holman, in Mauritius in 1829-30, reported that 100 soldiers of the 29<sup>th</sup> Worcestershire Rgt. were at work on the construction of a branch road from the Port Louis - Mahébourg road, to Souillac in the south. He also met the Indian convicts. cf. Barnwell, P. J. - Op. cit. , pp. 230, 232, 279.
- (12) Darwin, C. 'Journal and Remarks 1832-1836' vol III in Fitzroy, C (ed) Narrative of the Surveying Voyages of H.M.S. Adventure and Beagle between the years 1826 and 1836 describing their examination of the Southern Shores of South America and the Beagle's Circumnavigation of the Globe in three volumes. Henry Colburn, London, 1839, p. 572.
- (13) d'Unienville, M.C.A.M. , Baron - Op. cit. , Tableau no. 13 in vol III. Pridham, C. - Op. cit. , p. 395.
- (14) Lamusse, R. - Op. cit. , III, p. 356.  
North-Coombes, G.A. - Op. cit. , p. 22.
- (15) A Bengal Civilian, Journal of Five Months Residence in the Mauritius. Samuel Smith & Co. Calcutta 1838, p. 67.
- (16) Sornay, P. de La Canne à Sucre... - Op. cit. , pp. 234-5, 267.  
cf. Table 4,5 on livestock numbers in Mauritius.
- (17) Ibid, pp. 199-202, 345-8.  
d'Epinay, C - Op. cit. , pp. 10-13.
- (18) Earle, I. S. Sugar-Cane and its Culture, John Wiley & Sons, New York 1928, p6.  
North-Coombes, G.A. - Op. cit. , pp. 24, 31. The importation of guano in England in 1841 and its use in the West Indies c. 1840's provided examples that the well-informed Mauritian planters could follow. However this emulation would not have been so complete had there not been a real need for additional fertiliser. It may well be that the older lands were approaching a state of exhaustion after constant cropping for 30 years or more. The use of guano was popularised by pamphleteers. In Mauritius M.H. Gonin published Quelques Explications sur l'Engrais appelé Guano récemment introduit dans la colonie, in 1843, on the demand of two English traders who imported this fertiliser. cf. Sornay, P. de, - Op. cit. , pp. 236-239.
- (19) cf. Walter, A. - Op. cit. , pp. 46-8 for a list of hurricanes and cyclonic storms in Mauritius recorded before 1857.

- (20) Telfair, C. Some Account of the State of Slavery at Mauritius since the British Occupation in 1810, in refutation of Anonymous Charges Promulgated against Government and that Colony, Vallet & Anselin, Mauritius, 1830. pp. 110,111.
- (21) This is only a partial explanation, as the shift away from certain crops was also due to other influences, such as marketing problems in the case of cotton c. 1826, when the price fell by over 50% as a result of American competition. This affected the dependencies of Seychelles in particular. cf. Toussaint, A. Histoire des îles Mascareignes... - Op. cit., p. 174.
- (22) calculated from Martin, R.M. - Op. cit., p. 382.
- (23) Hunt, K.S. Sir Lowry Cole : A Study in Colonial Administration, Butterworths, Durban, 1974, p. 51.  
Holland Rose, M., Newton A.P., Benians E.A. (eds) The Cambridge History of the British Empire, Cambridge 1940, vol II, p. 312.
- (24) Telfair, C. - Op. cit., pp. xv
- (25) Ibid, p. 30.  
Prinsen Geerligs, H.C. - Op. cit., p. 17  
Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit., p. 51.
- (26) Mellor, G.R. British Imperial Trusteeship 1783-1850 Faber & Faber, London, 1951, p 86.  
Holland Rose, M et al. - Op. cit., pp. 233,239.
- (27) Lamusse, R. 'The Economic Development ..... ' - Op. cit., IV, Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice, vol 44, 1 (Jan.-March 1965) p. 12.  
Mathieson, W.L. British Slavery and its Abolition 1823-1838, Longmans Green & Co., London 1926, pp. 29-30.
- (28) Ibid, p. 31.  
Mellor, G.R. - Op. cit., pp. 84-5.
- (29) Mathieson, W.L. - Op. cit., pp. 31-2.
- (30) Burnett, J. Plenty and Want : A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1966, pp 24-5  
Burnett points to the high price-elasticity of demand for sugar.
- (31) cited in Mathieson W.L. - Op. cit., p. 32 The duties, to which sugar imported into Great Britain was subject, according to its geographical origin, are tabulated below.

<u>Period</u>	<u>West Indian Sugar</u>			<u>East Indian Sugar</u>			<u>Foreign Sugar</u>		
	£	s	d	£	s	d	£	s	d
1813-1818	1	10	0	2	0	0	3	0	0
1819-1830	1	7	0	1	17	0	3	3	0
1830-1836	1	4	0	1	14	0	3	6	2

Duties are given to nearest penny per cwt. (80,8 kgs) for muscovado (brown) sugar only. Mauritian sugar was subject to East Indian rates until 1825, to West Indian rates thereafter. In 1836 rates on West Indian and East Indian sugar were equalized. In 1830 the duty on West Indian sugar was equal to 108 % of the net selling price.  
cf. Deerr, N. - Op. cit. , II, p. 430.

Holland Rose, M. et al (eds) pp. 227, 228, 478.

(32) cited in Ibid, p. 31

(33) Ibid. cf. also Holland Rose, M. et al (eds)-Op. cit. , p. 477.

W.A. Green, in his book, British Slave Emancipation : The Sugar Colonies and the Great Experiment 1830-1865, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1976, has argued in the same vein that : "Although foreign sugar was excluded from the United Kingdom, the price of sugar in Britain was greatly affected by the prices prevailing in Europe. This would remain the case as long as the surplus production of the British colonies had to be sold overseas"(p. 39)

(34) Holland Rose, M. et al (eds) - Op. cit. , pp. 227-228, 288,478.

(35) cf. Mathias, P. The First Industrial Nation : An Economic History of Britain 1700-1914, Methuen & Co. Ltd. , London,1969, pp. 299-300.

(36) Toussaint, A. Port Louis..... - Op. cit. , pp. 251-4, 264.

Napal, D. - Les Constitutions..... - Op. cit. p.7.

Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , p. 61,n.29.

Note: Both Farquhar and Saunders stood for election to the House of Commons in 1823. Both were elected.

(37) Toussaint, A. Port Louis..... - Op. cit. , p. 264

(38) cf. K.S. Hunt - Op. cit. , Chapter III.

(39) Ibid, pp. 51-2.

(40) Toussaint,A. Port Louis..... - Op. cit. , p. 265.

(41) For West Indian opposition to the proposed measure cf. Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , pp. 52-3.

On the controversy in Mauritius cf. Toussaint, A. Port Louis... Op. cit. , pp. 264-5, Hunt, K.S. pp. 53-4.

(42) Toussaint, A. La Route des îles..... - Op. cit. , p. 94.

Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , pp. 49,54-5, 57.

This is the episode which gave rise to the myth that commerce and agriculture are incompatible cf. Chapter 1, above.

- (43) Hunt, K.S. - Op.cit., p. 57.  
Toussaint, A. Port Louis . . . . . - Op.cit., pp. 265-266.
- (44) Lamusse, R. 'The Economic Development. . . . .' - Op.cit., Revue Agricole et Sucrière de L'île Maurice, vol 43, 3 (Dec. 1964) p. 355
- (45) Williams, E. Capitalism. . . . . - Op.cit., p. 25.
- (46) Green, W.A. - Op.cit., p. 48.
- (47) calculated from data given by R.O. Béchet in 'Quelques Anciennes Sucrieries Mauriciennes' La Revue Agricole de l'île Maurice vol xxxII 5. (1953) cf. Appendix.
- (48) Green, W.A. - Op.cit., pp. 40-2.
- (49) North-Coombes, G.A. The Evolution of Sugar-Cane Culture. . . . - Op.cit., p. 165.
- (50) Béchet, O. - Op.cit., pp. 226, 230-1, 243, 244, 246.
- (51) Telfair, C. - Op.cit., p. xvi.
- (52) North-Coombes, G.A. - Op.cit., p. 115.
- (53) cf. Table 4,4, above.
- (54) Béchet, O. - Op.cit., passim. cf page references in Appendix.
- (55) Green, W.A. - Op.cit., p. 57.
- (56) Blyth, J. cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit., p. 250.
- (57) Béchet, O. - Op.cit., pp. 222-3, 225, 229, 236, 237, 240-1, 243-4, 246, 247, 253, 254, 256, 261, 262, 265-6, 271, 274, 281, 285.
- (58) Telfair, C. - Op.cit., p. 151. No. 35 in Appendix. 'To Major-General Darling administering the Government of Mauritius and Dependencies. The petition of Charles Telfair Esqr., joint proprietor of Belombre estate, at Mauritius and representing the persons interested in that property.'  
'Mémoire des Colons de l'île Maurice rédigé par Adrien d'Epina y et présenté par lui à Lord Goderich, le 16 Février 1831'. Appendix VII in Toussaint, A (ed) Les Missions d'Adrien d'Epina y (1830-1834) The General Printing & Stationery Cy. Ltd., Port Louis, 1946, pp 198-9 D'Epina y may have over estimated the number of steam engines imported into the island.
- (59) These needs are common to all sugar planters. cf. Green, W.A. -Op.cit., pp. 40-42, Williams, E. From Columbus to Castro. . . - Op.cit.p.121
- (60) Ibid, p. 126.  
cf. Toussaint, A. 'Le Domaine de Bénarès. . . . .' - Op.cit., pp. 39-44 and Chapter 1 above.

- (61) Gage John Hall cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit. , pp. 220-7 passim.
- (62) cf. Chapter 1.
- (63) Ibid.
- (64) Toussaint, A. Histoire des îles Mascareignes - Op. cit. , p. 177.  
Toussaint states that B.M. Howells has written at some length on this subject, but I was unable to consult the latter's Ph.D thesis, entitled Mauritius 1832-1849, a Study of a Sugar Colony, London 1952.
- (65) James Blyth cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit. , pp. 251-2.  
Lamusse, R. 'The Economic Development.....' - Op. cit. , III, p. 354.  
cf. Holland Rose, M. et al (eds) - Op. cit. , p. 483-485; Green, W.A. - Op. cit. , pp. 40-45 on Caribbean parallels.
- (66) Ibid.  
James Blyth cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit. , p. 249.
- (67) Gage John Hall cited in Ibid p. 224.
- (68) Lamusse, R. 'The Economic Development....' - Op. cit. , III, p.355.  
No information has been obtained on interest rate movements. High interest rates should not be seen so much as a measure of the scarcity of credit but rather as an index of the speculative nature of sugar-planting and the high risks of default.
- (69) Beaton, Rev. P. Creoles and Coolies ; or, Five Years in Mauritius first published in 1859, reissued in 1971 by Kennikat Press, Port Washington, New York.
- (70) cf. Documents on the establishment of the Banque de Maurice in Rev. Ret. Maur. vol 1, 4. (July, 1950) pp. 201-202; vol 1, 5. (Sept. ,1950) pp. 263-266.
- (71) Toussaint, A. Port-Louis..... - Op. cit. , pp. 313-314.
- (72) Toussaint, A (ed) Les Missions..... - Op. cit. , pp .xvi n. 3.
- (73) Ibid, pp. 17, 22, 25, 31, 45, 141, n. 70.
- (74) cf. Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit. , p. 245.  
Despatch of Sir M. Gomm to Earl Grey, dated Mauritius, 14th March, 1848 in British House of Commons Parliamentary Papers (Parl.Papers hereafter) (280) 11th May, 1849.  
Note that a fuller description of the Parl. Papers is given in the Bibliography.
- (75) Despatch of Sir M. Gomm to Earl Grey, dated Mauritius, 23 February, 1848, in Ibid p. 280.
- (76) Mathias, P. - Op. cit. , p. 150.
- (77) Rouillard, G. - Op. cit. , Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice

vol 45, 2, p. 127; vol 47, 1. p. 22.

Béchet, R.O. - Op.cit., p. 292.

Telfair, C. - Op.cit., p. 28. described his associates as offering "the union of intellect, and of consolidating capital, with the employment of physical activity". Blancard, the district magistrate, was a managing partner, but Telfair does not state whether he contributed funds to the association.

cf. also Gage John Hall in Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit., p. 222.

(78) Rouillard, G. - Op.cit., Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice vol 44, 3. p. 166.

(79) Rouillard, G. - Op. cit., Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice vol 49, 1, pp. 17,18.

Toussaint, A. 'Le Domaine de Bénarès....' - Op.cit., p. 56-59.

Toussaint wrote that François "achète et revend des terrains d'habitation à la Savanne". (p. 56)

Lamusse, R. - Op.cit., III, Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice vol 43, 4. (1964) p. 355-356. Lamusse says that in prosperous times "A Planter could encumber his estate with a dozen independent mortgages; his earnings in those days of prosperity were generally sufficient to cover the interest charges on these loans". (p. 356) cf. also Telfair, C. Op.cit., p. xv.

(80) A Bengal Civilian - Op.cit., pp. 87,88, 99.

(81) cf. Rouillard, G. - Op.cit., passim, Holland Rose M. et al (eds) - Op.cit., p. 483-485,; Green, W.A. - Op.cit., pp. 40-45.

(82) Rouillard, G. - Op.cit., Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice vol 44, 3, p. 171; vol. 42,2 pp 122, 125, 131; vol 47, 1, p. 24; vol, 49,1 pp 29-30.

(83) Cumpston, I. Indians Overseas in British Territories 1834-1854. Dawsons of Pall Mall, London, 1969, p. 126.

(84) On sugar monoculture and economic development cf. Conclusion.

(85) cited in Pridhatti; C. - Op.cit., p. 159.

(86) Encl. 3 in Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray, dated Mauritius, 11 April, 1829, in Parl. Papers (676) 16 July 1830, p. 165.

(87) Telfair, C. - Op.cit., pp. iii, xii.

(88) North-Coombes, G.A. - The Evolution of Sugar Cane Culture.... - Op.cit., p. 165 cf. Béchet R.O. - Op.cit., passim.

(89) Bagasse is the pulp left after the juice has been extracted from the cane, Telfair, C. - Op.cit., p. 47.

- (90) Williams, E. From Columbus to Castro.... - Op.cit., p. 122, cf. also Davis, R. - Op.cit., p. 132; Alden, D. - Op.cit., p. 42 ; Craton, M. Sinews of Empire : A Short History of British Slavery, Temple Smith, London, 1974, p. 129.
- (91) Wiehe, O. 'Nos Vieux Moulins' La Revue Agricole de l'Île Maurice, vol XXII, 6 (Nov.-Dec., 1943) pp. 260, 262.  
Toussaint, A. 'Le Domaine de Bénarès.....' - Op.cit., p. 62.
- (92) Ibid, pp. 86-88 of the 3665 slaves on estates in the Savanne district, 64% were employed in 15 sugar plantations while the remainder were used in 38 estates, growing crops other than sugar.
- (93) Craton, M. - Op.cit., p. 128.
- (94) Ibid, pp. 125, 127-128,  
Courtenay, P.P. Plantation Agriculture Frederick A. Praeger, New York, 1865, p. 58.
- (95) Green, W.A. - Op.cit., p. 51.  
Telfair, C. - Op.cit., p. 33.
- (96) d'Épinay, C. - Op.cit., p. 5. Not all writers felt that the island's stony soil was the chief obstacle to the use of ploughs in Mauritian agriculture. Cossigny for instance emphasised the shortage of labourers with the requisite skills and argued (incorrectly) that canes planted in individually-dug holes were more resistant to cyclonic storms than canes planted in plough furrrows.  
That the use of ploughs was linked to the labour situation was suggested by de Sornay who stated : "M. Telfair eut recours aux instruments aratoires, le nombre de bras dont il disposait étant devenu insuffisant."  
In any case stony soils did not cover the whole island. While agreeing that the use of ploughs was impractical in such soils, the planters of Flacq, writing in 1846, regretted that they were not in use elsewhere. Moreover stones and boulders were normally heaped in mounds (meules) or piled up into walls, making the use of ploughs on the cleared ground technically feasible.  
cf. Ibid, pp. 3 - 4; Sornay, P. de La Canne à Sucre.... -Op.cit., pp 183-186.
- (97) Craton, M. - Op.cit., p. 128.  
Green, W.A. - Op.cit., p. 51, says that labour redundancy in the offcrop meant that : " rather than invest in costly agricultural machinery

to magnify the extent of that redundancy, planters tended to rely on the manual labour of slaves, whose maintenance costs they were obliged to bear whether or not they were fully employed".

- (98) cited in Grant, C - Op. cit. , p. 93.
- (99) cf. Green, W.A. - Op. cit. , p. 51, n.47. Two sets of influences determined the type of technology used. One was sugar-cultivation, with its periodical need for labour, the other was the system of slavery, which tied manpower to the plantation. Monoculture reduced the possibility of renting out slaves during the offcrop.
- (100) A Lady - Op. cit. , pp. 125-126.
- (101) cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit. , pp. 229-230.
- (102) Telfair, C. - Op. cit. , p. 156.
- (103) A Bengal Civilian - Op. cit. , p. 40.
- (104) Martin, R.M. - Op. cit. , p. 383.  
Unienville, M.C.A.M. baron d', -Op. cit. III, pp. 345 et seq, Tableau no 12
- (105) North-Coombes, G.A. The Evolution of Sugar-Cane Culture..... - Op. cit. , p. 33.
- (106) This may have taken place in the period 1810 to 1817 but it is difficult to gauge to what extent, as herds that had been depleted during the years of naval blockade were also being built up.
- (107) Unienville, M.C.A.M. , baron d'. - Op. cit. III, p345 et seq.
- (108) Telfair, C. - Op. cit. , pp. 34, 155-156.
- (109) Ibid, pp. 47-48.
- (110) 'A Picture of Negro Slavery in the Mauritius' Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter no 44, January 1829, p. 9.
- (111) Ibid pp. 9-10. It is obvious that the supply of slave labour to the sugar industry must have increased as the pattern of land-use shifted from other crops to sugar cultivation.
- (112) One factor not examined in Chapter 4 was the rôle played by the planters in the expansion of the sugar industry. No systematic study of Mauritian planters has been made to my knowledge. As late as 1829 a majority of the planters were French-speaking and probably locally-born. At least, this is the impression gained from the examination of signatures of petitions from the various districts of the island to governor Sir C. Colville. Foreign-born planters were in a minority but many enterprising sugar-growers could be found in their ranks. For example, Telfair

developed estate management to a fine art, and George F. Dick, whose career is sketched in chapter 6 below, also contributed significantly to the progress of the industry.

The 'Bengal Civilian' described some of the most successful planters he met on the island during his visit. He recorded in his diary on the 7<sup>th</sup> May, 1835 : "met there (Hotel de Masse) two island proprietors, brothers, and by birth Germans. They arrived here penniless adventurer some years ago, and by industry and prudence laid the basis of a large fortune. Their sugar plantations in the 'Rempart' district brought them last year sixteen thousand pounds net profit."

But foreigners did not have a monopoly on enterprise as shown by the fact that it was the island-born A. d'Epinau who introduced the first steam engine into the colony for his sucrerie of 'Quatre Cocos'.

- (113) For a quantitative estimate of the importance of slave labour costs in sugar-making, cf. Table 6.1, below.

Appendix to Chapter 4. : The Size of Sugar Estates in Mauritius  
1831 - 1834.

1. The information on which this analysis is based is derived from R.O. Béchet's 'Quelques Anciennes Sucreries Mauriciennes' - Op.cit., Béchet lists the names and locations of various estates put up for sale in the first half of the nineteenth century. The total estate area, the area of each estate under cane at the time of sale, details of the sugar-mill (building, motive power, machinery) are also given; as are the names of sellers, and in a few cases, of buyers.
2. In this appendix (i) the size of the typical sugar estate in Mauritius; and (ii) the area under cane in a typical plantation, circa 1831-1834 are calculated.

Sugar Estates Put Up for Sale in Mauritius.  
1831 - 1834.

<u>Estate Name</u>	<u>Total Area in Hectares</u>	<u>Area Under Cane in Hectares</u>	<u>Motive Power of Sugar Mill.</u>
L'Unité et L'Agrément	515	126,6	4 H.P. Steam engine Water mill
Beau Vallon	464,3	137,2	Water mill
Grande Retraite	422,1	168,8	6 H.P. Steam engine
Belle Vue	420,4	168,8	Water mill with horizontal rollers.
Ratapoly	384,2	88,6	Water mill
Beau Rivage	379,9	168,8	4 H.P. Steam engine
Unnamed. Later La Gaité	379,9	211,0	6 H.P. Steam engine
Rivière Profonde	379,9	8,4	Water mill with horizontal rollers.
Mon Désir	337,7	48,5	Watermill with horizontal rollers.

Estate Name	Total Area in Hectares	Area Under Cane in Hectares	Motive Power of Sugar Mill.
Poudre d'Or	325,0	198,4	Water mill
Beau Bassin	316,6	84,4	3 H.P. Steam engine Water mill
La Ferme	295,5	147,7	14 H.P. Steam Engine
Bon Accueil	295,5	76,0	4 H.P. Steam engine
Unnamed. Later Bonne Mère	293,8	118,2	Water mill
Motte à Thérèse	275,6	28,2	Water mill
Mont Mascal	263,8	99,6	8 H.P. Steam engine
Beau Séjour	253,3	138,0	8 H.P. Steam engine Water mill
Solitude ou La Baraque	250,7	126,7	6 H.P. Steam engine Water mill
Mon Rocher	244,0	84,4	4 H.P. Steam engine Water mill with horizontal rollers.
Mon Roche	237,2	121,1	6 H.P. Steam engine Water mill
Plessis	205,1	116,1	Water mill
Beau Manguier	183,6	114,0	8 H.P. Steam engine
Unnamed. Later Espérance	175,2	105,5	4 H.P. Steam engine
Unnamed, contiguous to Bon Accueil	168,8	54,9	4 H.P. Steam engine
La Caroline	149,4	105,5	6 H.P. Steam engine
Unnamed, contiguous to Belle Vue	136,8	108,1	6 H.P. Steam engine
Plaisance	133,0	84,4	No Mill
Roc Val et Font	131,9	10,6	'Débris d'un manège'
'Espérance, formerly Pricey	118,2	42,2	Water mill.

Estate Name	Total Area in Hectares	Area Under Cane in Hectares	Motive Power of Sugar Mill.
Rocheterre	116,5	68,8	4. H.P. Steam engine
Clairfonds	116,5	28,7	Water Mill
Moulins	113,1	99,2	6 H.P. Steam engine
Mont Oreb	108,5	42,2	No Mill
Fougère	101,3	5,1	Water mill with horizontal rollers.
Belle Mare	78,9	22,8	4 H.P. Steam engine
Mount Rose	76,8	33,8	Water mill
La Paix	76,0	42,2	4 H.P. Steam engine
La Nourricière	65,9	4,2	Water mill
Bonne Espérance	29,6	19,8	4 H.P. Steam engine
L'Amitié	21,1	8,4	4 H.P. Steam engine
<hr/>			
Totals	9 040,6 =====	3 465,9 =====	

(i) Size of Mauritian Sugar Estate 1831-1834.

Number of cases = 40

Arithmetic Mean = 226,0 hectares

Median = 221,2 hectares

Semi-interquartile range = 102,2 hectares

Standard deviation = 88,5 hectares (to nearest decimal)

Coefficient of variation = 39,2

(ii) Area of Estate under Sugar-cane 1831-1834.

Number of cases = 40

Arithmetic Mean = 86,7 hectares

Median = 86,5 hectares

Semi-interquartile range = 85,9 hectares

Standard deviation = 84,2 hectares (to nearest decimal)

Coefficient of Variation = 62,5.

3. Notes to Appendix.

- (i) The period 1831-1834 was selected because of the large number of estates being put up for sale during those years. In all, forty estates, or as many as were put up for sale in the entire period 1817 to 1829 (figures for 1818 and 1830 not available). This selling frenzy in the land market was due to bad times. The spectacular increase in Mauritian sugar output and exports to Great Britain after 1825 depressed sugar prices in the British market and led to widespread economic distress in the sugar colonies. Guillebaud has argued that this distress was less in Mauritius than in the West Indies, because the former had secondary outlets for her sugar, molasses and cane spirits at the Cape of Good Hope, Australia and Madagascar. Nevertheless Mauritian sugar exports fell by a significant 16% from 1832 to 1833. This decline was not only due to falling prices abroad but also to the uncertainty which surrounded the question of slave emancipation and the payment of compensation. (1)
- (ii) The sample is large enough to be representative of the total size of Mauritian sugar estates in the early 1830's. According to the above calculations the typical sugar estate in Mauritius in 1831-4 was just above 220 hectares in extent. (arithmetical mean = 221,2 ; median = 226,2)
- (iii) The available data indicates that nearly 40% of the typical estate's area was devoted to sugar cultivation. That is, almost 87 hectares (arithmetic mean = 86,7; median = 86,5)

As pointed out in Chapter 4 above, it is obvious even where monoculture is the rule, that the entire estate area cannot be devoted solely to sugar cultivation. The area under cane in each estate is influenced by a variety of factors, such as, the estate's topography, the need for provision grounds, pastures and forests, for roads, residential and industrial space.

One example of land use, in an estate practising sugar monoculture is that of Palma. As pointed out in Chapter 1, this had been the island's premier coffee plantation in the last quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1778 Cossigny, the proprietor, reported that there were 71 800 plants in his coffee-walks, which it can be reckoned, must have covered an area of 28 hectares, as coffee shrubs were normally placed two metres apart.

An undetermined area was also devoted to indigo and to cotton cultivation. (2) By 1792 coffee growing had expanded to the point where it covered 44 hectares, but sugar had now displaced it in importance, the sugar-cane fields covering more than 125 hectares in extent. (3) When Palma was advertised for sale in the Gazette de Maurice of 1832 the plantation's total area of 454 hectares was being utilised as follows:

<u>Land Use</u>	<u>Area in Hectares</u>	<u>Percentage of Total Area</u>
Coffee	4	0,9 %
Sugar-cane	274,4	60,4 %
Manioc, Maize	61,2	13,5 %
Orchards, Garden, Yard	16,9	3,7 %
Pasture, Forests, Roads.	97,5	21,5 %

Clearly this pattern of land-utilisation was not incompatible with monoculture. In 1832 Palma was essentially a sugar plantation. The provision crops grown, maize and manioc, were not intended for the market. Used to feed the slaves and the proprietor these crops helped to cut down the estate's food bill: They were an integral part of the slave sugar economy. (4)

W.A. Green states that in Jamaica, where the sugar-plantations averaged 364 hectares in extent, between 20 and 30 % of the estate was under cane. In Barbados, where plantations were some 2/3rds smaller, up to 50 % of the land area was under sugar. (5)

- (iv) How can one explain the greater dispersion about the mean (cf. coefficient of variation) in the case of the area of the estate under cane? In the first place, each estate would be affected differently by factors as varied as topography, the crushing capacity of the mills installed etc... In the second, many of the estates put up for sale in 1831-1834 must have been in financial difficulties. In at least one case, that of Rivière Profonde, this was reflected in a significant decline in the area devoted to sugar-cane cultivation. In 1829 this estate of 380 hectares was sold by the 'Société Antoine Couve, Auguste Blaise and Henry K/Balanec' with 105,5 hectares under cane and a water mill

equipped with the latest horizontal rollers. (6) In 1834 it was resold by George Victor Chauvet with only "20 arpents de cannes abandonnées" (7) But except in a handful of cases, where the area under cane looks abnormally low, there is no reason to think that the remaining estates in our sample were similarly affected by the depression. Sugar-planters had no incentive to expand the cultivated acreage in such conditions, but at the same time there was no compelling pressure to reduce this area. This is because, unlike most cereal crops which are sown annually, sugar-cane is a perennial, whose roots can be left in the ground after the harvest to produce new shoots for the next crop. (ratoons) This practice of ratooning cannot be continued indefinitely, as it leads to declining yields, but in Mauritius, in the early days, 'fifth ratoons' were common. (8)

For this reason the foregoing estimates of the sugar estate area under cane are not likely to be unrepresentative. The handful of cases that are atypical account for the higher coefficient of variation but they do not exert a considerable influence on the average values.

#### References.

- (1) Béchet, R.O. - Op. cit. , pp. 223, 225, 227, 229, 232, 233, 236, 237, 241, 244, 246, 247, 253, 254, 256, 261, 262, 264, 266, 267, 271, 274, 275, 276, 277, 281, 284, 285, 286, 287, 288, 302, 313.  
Guillebaud, C.W. in Holland Rose M. , et al (eds) - Op. cit. , p. 483.  
Green, W.A. - Op. cit. , pp. 35, 38-39.  
Deerr, N. - Op. cit. , pp. 203-204.  
Lamusse, R. - 'The Economic Development. . . . . ' - Op. cit, III, Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice, vol 43, 4 (Dec. 1964) p. 356
- (2) Letter of Cossigny to Céré, dated 2 September 1778; and  
Letter of Hubert to Céré, dated 1st September 1778; in Rev. Ret. Maur. vol V, 2 & 6 (March, Nov. , 1954) pp. 107, 345.
- (3) Rouillard, G. Histoire des Domaines Sucriers. . . . - Op. cit. , VI, Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'île Maurice, vol 53, 1 & 2 ( 1974) p. 49
- (4) Wiehe, P.O. - Op. cit. , p. 260.
- (5) Green, W.A. - Op. cit. , p. 48.
- (6) Béchet, R.O. - Op. cit. , pp. 276-277.  
As stated in Chapter 4, the horizontal roller mill was introduced into

the island by Charles Telfair in 1819. The innovation spread slowly. In our sample of 40 mills, only three are specified to be of that kind. The horizontal roller mill was superior to the vertical-roller mill previously in use, in that it extracted more juice from the cane and was safer to operate.

cf. North-Coombes, G.A. The Evolution of Sugar-cane Structure - Op.cit. , p. 113.

Barnwell, P.J. & Toussaint, A. - Op.cit. , pp 138.

(7) Béchét, R.O. - Op.cit. , pp. 276-277.

(8) Prinsen Geerligs, H.C. - Op.cit. , p. 311 .

Sornay, P. de La Canne à Sucre . . . - Op.cit. , pp. 201-202.

## CHAPTER 5

### The Plantocracy under Siege 1810-1833 (I)

During the twenty-three years after the British conquest in 1810, the institution of slavery, on which the economic strength and the social importance of the British colonial plantocracies rested, was increasingly challenged from abroad. The challenges fell into three broad categories according to their nature and timing. The first included the attempts at forcing voluntary amelioration and gradual abolition on the planters by prohibiting the slave trade; the second, involved the direct enforcement of amelioration measures in the Crown colonies, and of their adoption by means of persuasion in the legislative colonies, as little evidence of voluntary amelioration was forthcoming; the third consisted of the measures leading to final emancipation. In this chapter, we will examine, how the Mauritian plantocracy reacted to such measures, which they perceived as external threats.

#### i. Mauritian Planters and Colonial Legislation.

It may be expected that Mauritian planters were unable to resist outside interference in local affairs, but in practice, even though they were denied political power in any recognised and permanent form, they had considerable political influence, and at one stage even felt strong enough to openly defy the might of the British Empire. Formal political representation had ended in 1803 when General Decaen suspended the constitution of 1791 for a period of ten years. The colonists repeatedly called for the revival of this constitution on the grounds that the treaty of capitulation had allowed them to retain their religion, laws and customs. Instead this demand was rejected and the colony was placed under the rule of a governor, responsible alone to the Colonial Office in London. (1) However in 1817 Governor R. T. Farquhar, of his own initiative, established Councils of Commune in Port-Louis and in the rural districts to advise the governor on local matters. The Councils were suspended by General Darling, who was acting-governor in 1819-1820 while Farquhar was on leave in England, and were finally abolished in 1821 by the metropolitan government. (2)

Six years later the planters and traders of Mauritius formed a private organisation which took the name of Comité Colonial, and whose stated purpose was to work "à concilier les vues du gouvernement de Sa Majesté avec les intérêts de la colonie". As will be seen later, it exerted considerable influence in the island and commanded the sympathetic attention of Governors Sir G. Lowry Cole (1823-1828), and Sir C. Colville (1828-1833).(3)

In term of an Order-in-Council of 9<sup>th</sup> February, 1825, Mauritius became a Crown Colony with an advisory Council of four officials, but all executive power was still vested in the person of the Governor. After the Comité Colonial had petitioned the Secretary of State, Lord Goderich, for some form of political representation, a Legislative Council of 14 members was set up. Seven of these were nominated by the Governor from the ranks of the most influential colonists and seven were officials.(4) While the Mauritian colonists had no political power in the formal sense, until the very end of the period under review, they exercised considerable political influence via unofficial and semi-official bodies. These private lobbies were by no means ineffective. A case in point was the abovementioned Comité Colonial, which continued its activities after the institution of the narrowly-based nominated Legislative Council in 1832.(5) Mauritian planters also had spokesmen, or 'agents', in London, namely Sir R. T. Farquhar, the former governor who sat in the House of Commons as M.P. for Newton, and later Hythe, in Lancashire and was the accredited representative of the Comité Colonial until his death in 1830. Thereafter John Irving, who also sat in the House of Commons, represented Mauritian interests in Britain.(6) On occasion the planters were even willing to use the threat of force or of boycotts to pressure the administration into considering their interests. Such tactics had little effect on solid personalities such as Major-General G. J. Hall, the acting-governor, who suspended a new militia created by members of the communal councils, on the grounds that it would support France rather than England in the event of a future conflict. The weak-willed governor Charles Colville, on the other hand, may well have been intimidated by the Comité Colonial's policy of arming its members, by setting up a volunteer corps in April, 1832, ostensibly to guard against any future slave revolt with which, it was argued, the British garrison would be unable to cope.(7) In an address to Colville, at the time, the colonists threatened the use of force against his administration in veiled yet unmistakable terms, stating

that one of the great dangers facing the colonists was : "les erreurs fatales que partagent les Ministres de Sa Majesté". This was clearly an allusion to the anti-slavery policy of the British government. They then added :

"Nous sommes disposés à donner à Votre Excellence les gages qu'elle peut désirer de la loyauté de nos sentiments. Oui, nous sommes tous munis d'armes nécessaires à notre défense; oui nous convenons des lieux où nous devons nous réunir à l'heure du danger; mais en même temps, nous repoussons toute idée d'insurrection. Armés contre la conspiration, ce n'est pas nous qui voudrions conspirer."(8)

Adrien d'Epinaÿ, founder of the Comité Colonial, denied that the colonists had threatened to oppose British laws by force of arms. He stated that they had merely taken precautionary measures as they harboured : "les plus grandes craintes d'une insurrection de la part des esclaves".(9) He protested that the colonists had no weapons except for "celles de chasse, de luxe et de curiosité" but admitted in the same sentence that some of them had imported muskets, although he claimed that these had been sold soon after the volunteer corps had been disbanded.(10) Mauritian writers have generally accepted the d'Epinaÿ interpretation of those events. A. Toussaint for instance wrote : "L'idée de s'opposer par la force des armes aux desseins du gouvernement britannique ne germa que dans la cervelle de quelques exaltés, et si d'aucuns allèrent jusqu'à le déclarer ouvertement ce fut beaucoup plus l'effet de cet esprit de fanfaronnade inhérent à la race française à laquelle appartenaient les colons, que d'une détermination bien arrêtée".(11)

The government of the day did not scoff at these displays of Mauritian bravado however, but took the threat of armed rebellion seriously. The number of British troops on the island, which had stood at 1 371 in 1826, the year before the formation of the Colonial Committee, was progressively raised to a peak of 2 321 in 1833, when there were four regiments instead of the usual two or three. This was the highest level reached by the garrison since 1816, and it was not to be exceeded again during the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.(12) Sir Charles Colville was replaced by Sir William Nicolay in January 1833. Nicolay had been the governor of Dominica, from April 1824 to July 1831, and of

St. Kitts, Nevis, Antigua and the Virgin islands until his appointment as governor of Mauritius in December 1832. He had far more experience in dealing with planters and administering sugar-colonies than his predecessor, whose administrative experience had been limited to the command of Bombay, in the first half of the 1820's. Nicolay did not have Colville's easy-going manner. He intended to command and to be obeyed and this earned him the dislike of the men he ruled(13) Nicolay's reputation was well-established in London. Thus on hearing of his appointment to succeed Colville as governor of Mauritius, Sir Lowry Cole wrote to the Secretary of State Lord Goderich of his dismay at the news, since Nicolay was not widely regarded as suited to hold public office, except in anti-slavery circles. (14)

Soon after his arrival in Mauritius, Nicolay laid down that unless the volunteer corps was disbanded, its members would face the death sentence. He initiated the construction of a fortress on Petite Montagne, on a hill overlooking the town and harbour of Port-Louis - a project which was to cost £ 40 000 - officials were suspended, Adrien d'Epinaï was dismissed as member of the Legislative Council, the Comité Colonial was abolished and a policy of anglicisation was embarked upon, especially in education. Although these measures estranged the islanders from the administration, they succeeded in restoring calm to the troubled colony. (15)

Overt opposition to British interference with the status quo took the form of a passive resistance campaign in 1832, when an ardent abolitionist, John Jeremie, arrived from England to take up the post of Procureur-Général in the place of Adrien's brother, Prosper d'Epinaï. This was 'L'Inertie' which lasted from the 5<sup>th</sup> June to the 13<sup>th</sup> July, or for a period of 39 days. (16)

A contemporary observer B.H. de Froberville noted in his diary : "Les

boutiques, magasins, bazar, ateliers sont fermés.

Aucun travail nulle part. Cet état de choses, ce deuil général durera aussi longtemps que M. Jeremie sera à Maurice . . . . Les tribunaux sont aussi fermés, les juges et avocats ne veulent pas siéger. Les navires en rade sont fort embarrassés, ils ne peuvent ni mettre leurs cargaisons à terre, ni charger, ni avoir du lest. Il est bien difficile de se procurer de quoi manger. Les bouchers ne tuent plus, les habitants n'envoient plus de bazar à la ville." (17)

In the same passage Froberville noted that while it was generally agreed not to resort to violence, there were armed planters in the rural districts that were ready to march to the capital in case of necessity. (18) By these methods the colonists forced Colville to order Jeremie to re-embark : like the commissioners of the Directoire thirty-six years earlier, John Jeremie was expelled from Mauritius because he had dared to challenge the system of slavery. (19)

It was not always necessary to employ strong-arm tactics or boycotts to resist the application of laws, originating in England, to the Mauritian context. Paul Knaplund pointed out that the fact of distance limited the effectiveness of government 'by remote control'. He said : "in those days, the governor was not an official at the end of a wire. He was the man on the spot. The distance between him and Westminster often made it imperative to make important decisions without or even in contravention of orders from them". (20)

This problem was emphasised by Nicolay who wrote to Stanley, the Colonial Secretary, in June 1834, that one of the latter's despatches had taken six months to reach the island. He added : "Indeed the greatest inconvenience is sustained from the tardiness and uncertainty of all communication between this country and England". (21) If the problem of distance prevented the prompt application of metropolitan directives in the colony, it also provided governors who were reluctant to enforce unpopular legislation with an obstructive mechanism. Time and again Cole and Colville wrote to England for further instructions, while the laws they had been told to enact were either suspended or promulgated in amended form. (22)

Not only the difficulties of communicating with the home government, but also the isolated position of governors at the apex of colonial society, predisposed the latter to follow policies in the interests of the upper stratum of slave-owners and planters. Most high officials, on whom governors relied for professional advice and social intercourse, were slave-owners themselves, or had interests in plantations. For instance governor Farquhar's secretary and aide-de-camp, as noted previously, were both extensive landed proprietors. (23) D.B. Davis has suggested that the actual content of various slave codes was of little importance since "whether

a Negro worked on Sunday or had an opportunity to marry were largely matters of local custom and circumstance".(24) In Mauritius the governor's representatives in the rural districts, the civil commissaries and the 'commandants de quartiers', were, more often than not, planters themselves.(25)

Thus the colonial administration was linked to the plantocracy, not only by an affinity of rank and class, but also by economic ties. Moreover, at least from the point of view of the public treasury, the planters were the most productive and most important class economically. During an age when the rights of property were hallowed, the interests of the propertied classes were invariably placed above those of the dispossessed. All this suggests that the governors tended to favour the plantocracy whenever possible in any conflict of interests arising between slaves and planters. The planters were not politically dominant, but they did have considerable influence on the administration. The 'inertie' of 1832 shows that they could act effectively for short periods, but the extent of their influence varied according to the personality of the governor, and, in the long term, was circumscribed by metropolitan policy.

## 2. The Abolition of the Slave Trade.

The first threat to Mauritian slavery, after 1810, took the form of attempts at abolishing the slave trade. The Slave Trade Abolition Act of 1807 became immediately applicable to the island, but Farquhar was at first unwilling to enforce it. He wrote to the Earl of Liverpool, for the island to be granted a temporary exemption from that prohibition. Farquhar argued that insular agriculture was greatly handicapped by man-power problems, as a result of a decline in slave numbers following the naval blockade, during which the volume of slave imports had fallen drastically, and of a spate of 'epidemic distempers following a state bordering on famine which swept off numbers of the blacks within the period of some years past'. He pointed out that the colonists had been granted "their laws, customs and usages" in terms of the treaty of capitulation, and stated, that he had been led to understand, that a continuation of slave-trading had been sanctioned for the island of Trinidad.(26)

The Secretary of State castigated Farquhar for his condoning of the slave trade in the following terms : "It would be improper ... for me to

lose even a single day, in taking notice of that part of your dispatch which respects the Slave Trade... You have been entirely misinformed as to the fact that there is any foreign colony in His Majesty's possession, in which the Slave Trade has been tolerated since the abolition of that trade by Parliament; and I should have thought that it would have occurred to you, that such a distinction would have been not only in direct repugnance to the principles upon which the slave trade was abolished, but that it would likewise have been inconsistent with every consideration which was due to the ancient colonies of the British Crown".(27)

Despite Liverpool's remonstrances, the Abolition Act of 1807, and the Slave Trade Trade Felony Act of 1811, which declared participation in illicit slave-trading to be a felony punishable with transportation, were only registered in the island in 1813. The laws were not enforced very enthusiastically by the colonial authorities, in the face of opposition from the planters who, it was reported were "inimical to the suppression of the Slave Trade".(28)

Continuing slave importations into Mauritius led to a visit of a parliamentary commission of inquiry to the island in October 1826, under the leadership of George Colebrook.(29) This Commission of Eastern Inquiry stayed in the island until mid-1828 and produced a voluminous report, published in 1830, which examined all aspects of the colony's administration, including the question of illicit slave trading.(29) It concluded that the slave trade had continued until 1824, but that there was no proof that the massive expansion in sugar cultivation after that date was a reflection of continued servile importations since.(30) It estimated however, that 20 000 to 30 000 of the 65 000 slaves currently in the island had been illegally introduced.(31)

There is no doubt that illicit slave-trading on a fairly extensive scale occurred in Mauritius in the first decade of British rule, but this trade probably did not assume the gigantic proportions ascribed to it by the Commissioners of Inquiry, or as will be argued below, by the Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter. In its January 1829 issue, the Reporter claimed that in the first five years of Farquhar's administration alone " an importation of

upwards of 42 000 slaves must have taken place into that single island".(32) This reckoning was arrived at by comparing slave numbers in Mauritius in 1809 (60 000) and in 1815 (87 352) on the assumption that there was a natural decrease in the slave population of the order of 2 500 or of between 29 to 40<sup>0</sup>/oo per annum. The slave population totals for 1809 and 1815 were correctly recorded from official sources, and, there is little doubt, that part of the increase between these two dates was due to slave-smuggling. However the official statistics are not reliable. It is not clear what the actual slave population totalled in 1815, but the 1809 figure, which was drawn from the returns to the collector of taxes, understated the real position. In a letter to the Under Secretary of State dated 3 February 1829, Farquhar said that he had seen a memorandum in Decaen's own hand-writing, in the island's archives, which placed the slave population at over 80 000 in 1810. A similar observation was made by James Prior, who believed that between 70 000 and 80 000 slaves were in Mauritius at the time. (33)

The Reporter also pointed to excessive mortality amongst the island's slaves as indirect evidence for a high level of illicit slave importations. It calculated, on the basis of burial statistics for Port-Louis for the years 1815 to 1820, that amongst the slaves, there was "one death yearly in every ten or eleven persons or about ten per cent of deaths per annum; the ordinary mortality of Europe being not more than an average on all ages of from two to three per cent per annum."(34)

It stated that : "supposing the same rate of mortality to extend over the whole slave population of the island, we shall have, as the result, not less than 7 000 deaths annually, or about 126 000 deaths in the 18 years we have possessed the island; a mortality nearly equal to killing off the whole of the slaves existing at any time twice fold; a number equal to which must have been supplied by means of importations, and by the consequent accumulation of the well-known atrocities from which alone such importations could be obtained". (35)

These claims were severely attacked by Captain Vicars, a former official, who argued that the Reporter was not justified in calculating the death-rate, for the island as a whole, on the basis of the burial figures for

Port-Louis. There were proportionately more deaths amongst the slaves in Port-Louis than in the rural districts, he said, not only because of the unhealthier climate, but also because the capital was the site of a government hospital, where all government slaves and apprentices, recaptured maroons, and privately owned slaves from the surrounding districts were admitted for treatment. As there was neither a church nor a churchyard in the neighbouring quarters of Black River and Plaines Wilhems, the dead from these areas were often taken to the Port-Louis cemetery for burial as well. Finally, the burial statistics for the period 1815-1820 were inflated by the outbreak of a cholera epidemic in 1819 which caused great mortality amongst the slaves. (36)

We may never be able to gauge the actual extent of illicit slave-trading into Mauritius - the Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter's assessment was obviously inflated, as was that of the Commission of Eastern Inquiry - but there is evidence that it was nevertheless considerable.

Planters were anxious to import slaves into the colony, and they were able to do so despite the laws prohibiting the slave trade, because of the imperfect enforcement of such laws. From 1813 to 1826 only 2 986 slaves were seized by the Vice-Admiralty Court, which had been set up in 1815 to deal with infringements of the slave trade abolition laws. But this figure could only have been a mere fraction of the total number smuggled into the territory. (37)

From 1810 onwards Mauritius may have been nominally governed by Great Britain, but, as stated above, most functionaries were either local men or persons who shared their views, as in the case of many high officials. Philip Beaver, captain of the frigate Nisus, who landed in Mauritius with the invasion force in November 1809 remarked that immediately after the capitulation, "some of these unworthies (French officials), already professing an inviolable attachment to our government, were candidates craving for a situation under it; such warm professions to strangers must be equally as delusive as the smile on the face of death." (38)

Governor Farquhar appears to have tolerated many irregularities in the administration, but when he was replaced by Major-General John Gage Hall in

1817, the latter was highly critical of corrupt and dishonest officials. Hall believed that many of these were favourable to the slave trade. In April, 1818, he sent five slave traders for trial to England as he felt that they would not be punished by Mauritian tribunals. George Smith, the president of the Vice-Admiralty Court, who was also the chief-judge, until his death in 1823, was responsible for the issue of warrants for the arrest of suspected slave traders, but he often adopted an obstructionist attitude. Thus he refused to issue a warrant for the seizure of 140 slaves that a certain Bousquet was reported to have landed at Mapou, in the north. The same reluctance to suppress the trade was evidenced by the civil commissaries in the districts, who as Smith's representatives were also empowered to issue warrants. (39) Their behaviour is easy to fathom as most of them were landed proprietors with a stake in the continuance of the trade. (40) Smith's actions can be attributed to his venality. He was apparently deeply indebted to local traders and died bankrupt. Moreover he was on very friendly terms with suspected slave traders and was said to have countenanced their participation in the trade. (41) Some of the commandants de quartiers were prominent planters, for instance Charles Telfair who had interests in several sugar plantations and who was commandant of the Moka and Quartier Militaire districts. (42)

Hall suspended judge Smith and various other officials from office and took vigorous steps to suppress the slave trade. These included the unpopular "domiciliary visitations", which involved plantation searches for illegally imported blacks by the military. (43) He also reversed Farquhar's policy in Madagascar and secured the seizure of a number of slave ships, but he was only moderately successful in suppressing the trade. (44)

Farquhar's whole strategy for suppressing the illicit slave trade was based on his so-called 'Madagascar Policy' which aimed at arresting the trade at its source. In July 1820 Farquhar boasted that : "the great source of this traffic, as far as regards Mauritius, and the adjacent government, is Madagascar; a source which had been fully and completely closed by the treaty with Radama, King of Ova, from whose country all the Madagascar slaves come, and by other precautionary measures at Madagascar, to assure ourselves of the complete execution

of that treaty by means of an English agent, residing with him and a chain of correspondence and communication to be depended upon with the chieffains, through whose territories the slaves must pass for embarkation."(45)

During the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the East African coast had replaced Madagascar as the main source of slaves for the Mascarenes. During the early 19<sup>th</sup> century there may have been a shift of the pattern of slave-trading back to Madagascar, given the hazards of slave smuggling, the greater proximity of that island to Mauritius and the increasing contacts with it, resulting from Farquhar's policy. Indirect evidence for the renewed importance of Madagascar as a source of slaves, is given in Table 5, 1, below, which shows the place of origin of foreign-born slaves in 1806 and 1826-1827 respectively. (46)

TABLE 5, 1.      Foreign-born Slaves by Place of Origin 1806 and 1826-7.

<u>Year</u>	<u>East Africa</u>	<u>Madagascar</u>	<u>Far East</u>
1806	60,8 %	25,1 %	14,1 %
1826	55,6 %	36,8 %	7,5 %

It should be noted however that, while the proportion of foreign-born slaves from Madagascar increased substantially in the two decades after 1806, this was not offset by an equal fall in the East African component of the foreign-born slave population. The greatest decline was in the proportion of foreign-born slaves from the far East (India and Malaya). This suggests that the falling off in the East African trade was not as great as Farquhar's claim, that Madagascar was "the great source" of the slave traffic, implied.

The application of the policy, of stopping the trade at its source, to Madagascar, was ambiguous in its purpose and consequences. There is little doubt that Farquhar's interest in Madagascar did not stem principally from concern with an ongoing slave trade, but from dreams of turning the 'Great Island' into a prized possession of Great Britain. Farquhar had been reluctant to return the post of Tamatave to the French after the Napoleonic

wars, and had to be compelled to do so in 1816 by the British government, which was unwilling to bear the costs of a new colonising venture after a protracted and costly conflict. (47) But the ambitious governor did not abandon his grandiose plans. From a local trader Froberville, whom he sent to Madagascar, Farquhar learnt of the expanding Merina Kingdom on the Hauts-Plateaus, under the energetic Radama I. (48)

Farquhar had first-hand experience of indirect rule from his earlier career as English administrator in South-East Asia and he hoped to use this device to gain control of Madagascar for Britain. (49) In 1816 he initiated contact with Radama and the following year sent a mission, led by James Hastie, to the King, which on 23<sup>rd</sup> October, 1817 secured the latter's ratification of a treaty, whereby he agreed to ban the exportation of slaves from his dominions. In return the British were to supply annual payments of gold and silver coins, 100 gunpowder barrels and 1 000 rifles and ammunition. (50) The real purpose of the treaty was to support Radama in extending his rule over Madagascar : the stipulation about ending the slave trade was no more than a clever ploy to ensure British backing for the project, and the approval of the Colonial Office for the massive expenditure involved. (51)

Deschamps says that British guns and expertise led to the annexation of Tamatave on the east coast in 1817. In 1823 the Antakarana country in the north was seized with the help of a British frigate, while Merina power was extended southwards along the east coast as far as Mananjary and beyond. Finally expeditions in 1825 and 1827 secured the southern part of the country. Meanwhile the Merina Kingdom was also extended westwards to its furthest limits, by 1826. (52)

Two conclusions can be drawn from the above. The first is that the treaty with Radama had little to do with the slave trade as such. Hall seemed to have followed this interpretation. He wrote that Farquhar's policy favoured slave-trading : "putting up a political façade without preventing the traffic." Indeed, as Mauritian contacts with Madagascar increased, so did the opportunities for slave-trading. (53)

The second, is that Farquhar's statement, that all Malagasy slaves taken from Mauritius came from the Hova Kingdom, was false. We have seen above that the Merina expansion followed rather than preceded the treaty of 1817 and was not complete until a decade later. Moreover Merina control of the long coast-line could never be complete, the French had trading-posts

in the region and large parts of the southern and west coasts never came under Merina rule at all. (54)

Finally, if Farquhar's policy of suppressing the slave trade at its source was to be effective, it needed to embrace the East African coast as well. Portugal and Britain had agreed to cooperate in prohibiting the slave trade and by a treaty of 1817 accepted a reciprocal right of search, whereby cruisers of either nation could intercept and search suspected slavers sailing under the other nation's flag, but there is little evidence that this was effective in stopping the slave trade from Mozambique. (55) Slaves were also taken in large numbers from the Omani Arab settlements on the East African coast, especially from Zanzibar, to the Seychelles archipelago, a dependency of Mauritius. With the connivance of local officials, it was easy to obtain certificates for the trans shipment of those slaves to the last-mentioned island. (56) Kuczynski says that after the failure of cotton cultivation in the Seychelles in 1826, 1 424 slaves were transferred to Mauritius. In 1826 on the island of Mahé, the chief one in the group, there were only 15 'gens d'armes' to keep the peace and enforce the abolition laws. This was an impossible task given the large number of islands, of which at least nine were inhabited. The officer commanding the islands, Madge, participated in the contraband trade in slaves as did earlier officials. (57)

Until September 1822, when Farquhar's representative, Captain Moresby of H.M.S. Menai, concluded a treaty with the Imaum of Masqat for abolishing the slave trade with foreign powers within his dominions and dependencies, the policy of suppressing the slave trade at its source was incomplete and thus ineffective. (58)

The Imaum had been offered commercial concessions, and had been promised Great Britain's friendship and protection, in exchange for a prohibition on the export of slaves from his dominions. Close adherence to the terms of the treaty would have cost the Imaum some 40 000 to 50 000 dollars in duties foregone. He may have been unwilling to bear such a loss, especially since the Moresby treaty did not bring any equivalent benefits in return. As Major-General Darling, wrote to the Secretary of State : "It does not appear by any documents here; that the Imaum is to receive any pecuniary compensation for the part he has taken in this affair." (59)

Moreover the Moresby Treaty suffered from the same drawback as that concluded with Radama I, in that it did not apply to a very large portion of the East African coast. In 1811 the Imaum, Sayid Said ibn Sultan, only controlled the towns of Zanzibar and Kilwa, while the rest of the coast and islands, and even the town of Mombasa, though nominally under Omani control, were practically independent. Omani hegemony was to be attained only in 1840 after Said had deposed the Mazrui rulers of Mombasa. (60)

In 1819 Mauritius came within the jurisdiction of the naval station at the Cape of Good Hope, and instructions were issued by the Admiralty to the commander of its vessels stationed at the island to afford "to the governor all the assistance in his power towards the prevention of a traffic in slaves." Cruisers were also sent out to patrol the coast of Madagascar and of the African main land. (61)

However, for a variety of reasons, these steps, taken to suppress the illicit traffic at sea, were of limited effectiveness.

In the first place, thousands of square kilometres of ocean had to be patrolled, and a large number of potential embarkation points had to be kept under surveillance. This was an impossible task given the means at the Royal Navy's disposal. Thus Captain C.R. Moorsom of H.M.S. Ariadne reported, in mid July 1825, that he had visited Ibo, Zindy and other places on the east coast without uncovering evidence that slave trading was organised on a regular basis there, but he warned: "when Arabs are in the practice of resorting to certain spots, they would doubtless bring slaves on previous agreement with any slave dealer." (62)

The British could only make infrequent visits even to well-known slave markets such as Zanzibar, while the slaving ships could arrange to pick up their cargoes at lesser-known points along the coast.

In the second place, foreign powers did not actively support British attempts at ending the trade. Britain had concluded treaties for the prevention of the slave trade with Portugal, Spain and the Netherlands in 1817 and 1818, which included a reciprocal right of search, as defined above. Captured slaving ships were to be taken to Sierra Leone or to other designated ports in South-Central America for adjudication. (63)

The treaty with Portugal had little effect on the large-scale exportation of slaves from Mozambique. Captain Owen of H.M.S. Leven reported in June 1821 that two French vessels had recently purchased slaves there and that Lupe de Cardinas, head of one of the Portuguese establishments, instigated inter-tribal wars in order to secure an abundant supply of slaves; Owen lamented: "that all Portuguese authorities everywhere on the coast either enter into or take part in this infamous trade with such adventurers as present themselves in this pursuit, or by their connivance or imbecility do still afford facilities to their success, that cannot fail to render vain its total suppression."(64)

France had abolished the slave trade in July 1815 but the penalties prescribed for offenders were too light to prove an effective deterrent, while the French navy and colonial administrators did not enthusiastically enforce the prohibition. In order to secure a more effective abolition of slave trading to French colonies, and that carried on by vessels sailing under the French flag, the British government repeatedly called for a reciprocal right of search to be agreed upon by the two nations. The French rejected these demands on the grounds that the principles of reciprocity would be negated by the numerical superiority of the Royal Navy, and that French public opinion would not stand for a voluntary surrender of French maritime independence.(65) Attempts were made to placate the British by increasing the severity of the laws against slave trading, but penalties were still relatively light. For instance the law of 4<sup>th</sup> March, 1831 only prescribed short-terms of imprisonment for convicted slave-traders.(66)

This situation was a boon to slave-traders supplying the Mauritian market, as they were able to use neighbouring Bourbon as a refuge and an operating base, and to smuggle slaves into Mauritius in French-registered vessels, that were immune from seizure by British patrols. On the 11<sup>th</sup> May 1821 Farquhar reported that an unnamed ship, registered in Nantes and fitted out at Bourbon, had been seized carrying slaves from Zanzibar. Papers found on board indicated that the slave cargo had been destined for Mauritius.(67) On the 7<sup>th</sup> August, Captain Moresby wrote to Farquhar that he had captured the brig Industry off Zanzibar, three days earlier, with a cargo of 140 slaves in irons. Moresby said that although the ship's officers and crew were English,

and that its owner, 'Bataille', was a British subject living in Mauritius, it sailed under the French flag, either to escape detection, or whenever circumstances demanded it. Moresby hoped that this capture would make the French government aware of : " the frauds that are daily practiced upon them to procure clearances from Bourbon, for vessels engaged in the worst of traffics. "(68)

The governor of Bourbon laid claim to the Industry, but Farquhar rejected this claim as the case had come before the Court of Vice-Admiralty.(69) In November 1823 Captain Hay of H.M.S. Delight captured the Cécile with 160 slaves on board in Passandara bay, on the north-west coast of Madagascar. The Cécile's captain, Jules Mourgues, a French subject, was taken directly to Mauritius by Hay where he was jailed. Meanwhile the Cécile was forced to call at Bourbon, on its way to Mauritius, by a shortage of supplies and was sequestered by the governor, H. de Freycinet. As no reciprocal right of search existed at that time between France and England, Freycinet issued a strong protest against the incident which he described as "contrary to the dignity of France and the interests of the King". Freycinet claimed the boat, its cargo and crew for France and demanded the return of Mourgues and of eleven slaves that had been transported to Mauritius by Hay. (70)

Other slave-traders resorted to the same kind of subterfuges as those adopted by the owner of the Industry. For instance the Soleil, from the Seychelles, sailed under the Portuguese flag, although it was manned entirely by English and French subjects, since : "a fictitious sale of the .... vessel had been made to a Portuguese at Oibo!"(71) Similarly, slaves were taken from Zanzibar to the Mascarenes under Arab colours, and ostensibly in Arab-owned and manned ships "whilst the whole of the interest in these speculations, and the advance of the funds for carrying them on might be European". (72)

Part of the Industry's success in evading capture during the ten years since the conquest lay in "the skill and cunning with which her affairs had been managed". But that ship "had annually poured so many hundred victims of her traffic upon the shores of Mauritius and Bourbon", also, because of her small size and "her quickness in sailing". Most slave-traders used small coasting vessels known as caboteurs or chasse-marées that could negotiate the shallow passes in the coral reefs surrounding the island. For

a long time this effectively put the slaving ships out of reach of pursuing warships, and although guards were posted at spots along the coast opposite these passes, it was comparatively easy to disembark slaves under cover of darkness, notwithstanding Farquhar's allegations to the contrary. (73)

Hall's denunciations and his suspension of corrupt officials, prompted Farquhar to introduce internal measures for the suppression of the slave trade, after his return from England in July 1820. For instance, he commissioned a number of small crafts to scour the island's coast and to patrol the lagoons, lying between the reefs and the shore. According to Hart Davis, the collector of customs, whom Hall had described as the only reliable member of the administration, this strategy paid off in bringing the trade to a temporary standstill. Davis did not believe that the suspension of the traffic would be permanent since the trade could prove "so lucrative to the unprincipled speculator". (74) Indeed, barely a day after Hart Davis had written to the governor on this subject, a small schooner, Le Coureur, landed a number of slaves on the coast without opposition, even though it was known that it was to attempt this landing. Lieutenant Wetherly of H.M.S. Menai had stationed a small vessel, the Henriette, to intercept Le Coureur but, presumably because of the crew's unfamiliarity with the hazards of coastal sailing, the Henriette foundered upon the reefs, before Le Coureur's arrival. An indication of the low risks of detection or of the high profits involved in the illicit trade is given by the fact that Le Coureur's owners had readily given a sum of 6 000 dollars to the Collector of Customs which had been levied to prevent the ship from "deviating from her ostensible voyage". (75)

There is evidence of a significant decline in the volume of illicit slave importation into Mauritius in the 1820's. Whereas, despite its tendency to natural decrease, the slave population had probably increased in the first decade of British rule, it failed to maintain itself thereafter. Official figures, indicate that the slave population, which totalled over 87 000 in 1815, had fallen to well below 70 000 by the end of 1826. (76) On the 18<sup>th</sup> November 1824, Sir G. Lowry Cole wrote to Earl Bathurst that he had every reason to believe that the introduction of slaves into Mauritius had entirely ceased. (77)

How can this decline be accounted for? While doubt has been cast on the effectiveness of the measures adopted for suppressing the slave trade, taken singly; there was a significant increase in the number of such measures in the early 1820's. They ranged from external means of suppression, such as the Moresby treaty with the Imaum of Masqat, to internal remedies, as evidenced by the use of small schooners to patrol the lagoons, the framing of regulations controlling fishing, the system of depositing funds with the Controller of Customs, as security against participation in the trade, and an increase in military look-outs along the coast. The zeal of naval units was perhaps also never higher than under the inspired leadership of Captain Moresby, then in command. Taken together these measures represented a greater effort, than formerly, at rooting out the trade.

The decline in the slave trade in the 1820's can also be linked to a growing awareness in Mauritius that participation in the illegal traffic worked against the colonists' interests. From 1823 to 1825, Mauritians were involved in a campaign for obtaining an equalisation of duties on Mauritian and West Indian sugar imported into England. They realised that the success of their demands for fiscal parity with the West Indian colonies could be impaired by evidence of continuing slave smuggling into the island.

More effective slave registration measures from 1826 onwards (78) and the inordinate attention granted to the subject of the illicit slave trade, both in the House of Commons, and by the Commission of Eastern Inquiry, were probably more effective in curbing that trade in the second-half of the 1820's, than any police measure that may have been adopted.

After 1826, there was also a legalised transfer of servile labour from Seychelles' cotton fields to Mauritian sugar plantations, which might have dampened the need for additional slave labour. (79)

From 1830 to 1833 the planters were under fierce attack from abroad. They had to contend with calls for emancipation without compensation on the grounds that the bulk of Mauritian slaves had been illegally imported, and with the large-scale application of amelioration measures in the colony. This was the time when Adrien d'Epinaÿ and the Comité Colonial were engaged in defending Mauritian interests in London and the planters may well have realised that further evidence of slave trading would have severely impaired their case. (79b)

From 1834 onwards a new slave trade was begun, under

guise of the importation of indentured labour from India. Thus what has to be explained is not so much the ending of the Mauritian slave trade as merely its temporary cessation for about a decade.

### 3. The Failure of Amelioration Policy in Mauritius.

British abolitionists believed that the slave trade Abolition Act of 1807 "had set in motion a chain of consequences which must issue in freedom". As the tendency of slave populations to decrease by natural means could no longer be counteracted by massive annual importations, the planters were expected to improve the maintenance of their slaves and to adopt means, such as the encouragement of marriages and of stable families, that would be conducive to natural population growth. In the end this could result in the abolition of slavery itself, as amelioration would prepare the slaves for freedom, and would enable them to accept its responsibilities. One of the foremost spokesmen of the abolitionists, James Stephen the Elder, wrote that they looked "to an emancipation of which not the slaves but the masters themselves would be the willing authors". (80)

This first strategy did not pay off in Mauritius, where continued slave smuggling until the 1820's, did not allow long-term pressures, for utilising slaves more efficiently and for husbanding the slave stock, to develop. But, even supposing that illicit slave-trading had been suppressed at an early date, it is unlikely that a wholesale shift in planter preferences from buying to breeding would have taken place. This is because, while amelioration measures would immediately increase planter outlays on food, clothing, shelter and medical care for his slaves; the transition from a naturally decreasing population to one increasing by natural means was bound to be slow. It is true that the plantocracy as a whole stood to benefit from the effects of amelioration measures on demographic performance in the long-run, but the individual planter was rather more concerned with avoiding short-run increases in costs.

An improvement in the treatment of slaves would contribute to population expansion by lowering the death rate, and possibly also by causing the birth rate to increase. This however would not be reflected in an increase

in the total slave population so long as the demographic structure remained in a state of imbalance, with males greatly outnumbering females and with an upward bias in the age-distribution. In practice, the restoration of a balanced population structure called for a decline in the foreign-born component of the slave population relative to the locally-born component, since, while the latter was characterised by sexual balance and a normal age-structure, the former was marked by a preponderance of males and a relative paucity of nubile females. Thus until the proportion of foreign-born slaves in the total slave population declined, either through natural 'wastage' or as a result of a rise in the number of creole slaves through natural increase, amelioration measures would not be reflected in a positive net rate of increase of the total population. (81)

In Jamaica in 1807, half the slaves were locally born and, in 1815, the sex-ratio reached a normal balance of 1 to 1. The transition to a demographically balance slave population took longer to accomplish in Mauritius because of the persistence of illegal slave trading in that island. The proportion of locally-born slaves rose from 26,6 % of the total to 50,2 % in 1826-1827 but by that latter date male slaves still outnumbered females by 1,6 to 1 as opposed to 2 to 1 in 1809. (82) Figure 5,1 (a) shows the slave population structure in Mauritius in 1826-1827 by sex, age and place of birth. The data on which this figure was based is presented in tabular form in the Appendix to this chapter. It can be seen that while creole male and female slaves were nearly equal in number in all age-groups, foreign-born male slaves outnumbered females by 2,8 to 1. Moreover foreign-born slaves tended to be older than locally-born slaves, being poorly represented in the below-17 age-groups, but predominating in the 17 to 60 and the over-60 categories. The abnormal features of this population pyramid are highlighted by a comparison with the population structure in 1944, when 97,8 % of the total population was locally born, which is pictured in Figure 5, 1 (b) and in the Appendix. (83)

The above considerations suggest that planters would not voluntarily adopt amelioration measures after the suppression of the slave trade, at least not until the slave population was clearly increasing by natural means. This is why Jamaican planters were critical of the great expenditure resulting from the amelioration laws introduced in the 1820's, which they said did not reflect "the will of the proprietors" but of an external authority.

Slave Population Pyramid 1826-1827

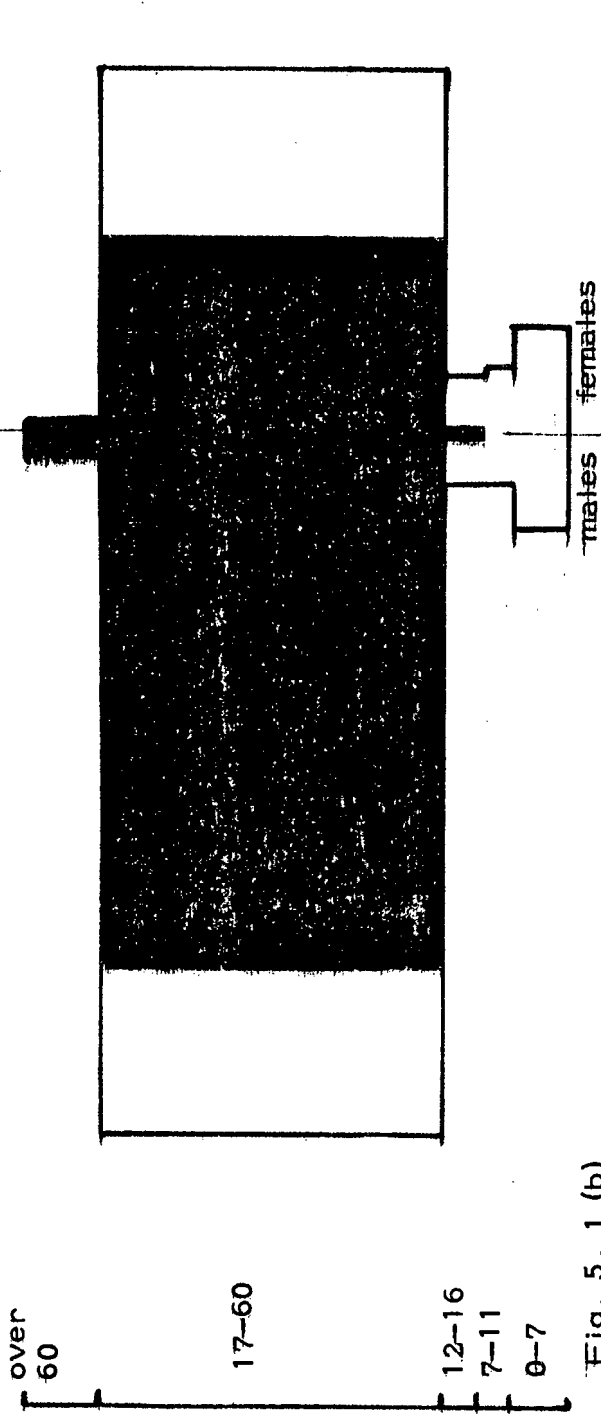
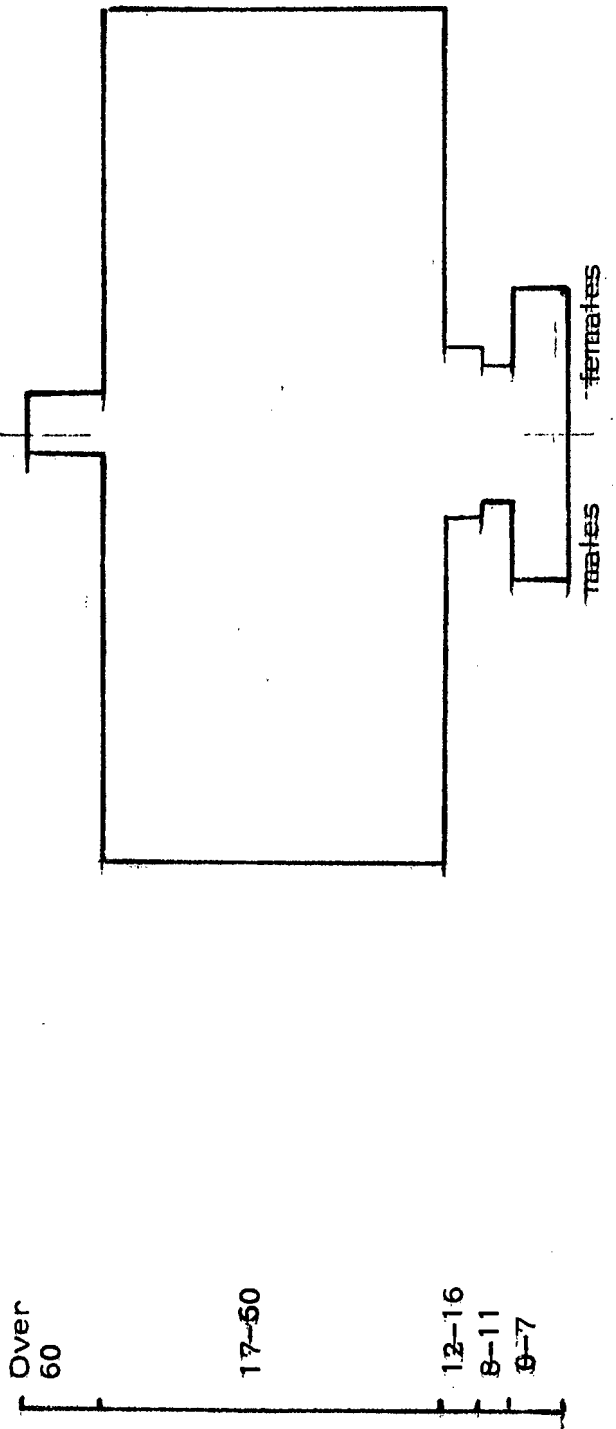


Fig. 5, 1 (b)



Total Population Pyramid 1844

They argued that high production costs made them unable to compete on equal terms with cheaply-grown Cuban sugar; Cuba having the advantages of an abundant supply of imported labour from Africa and cheaper slave maintenance costs. Yet, as R.B. Sheridan has pointed out, the restrictions imposed on British planters in their recruitment and utilisation of slave labour in the twenty-five years after 1807 had a counterpart in the guaranteed monopoly of the home market for colonial wares. But even this support of the British colonial sugar-economy was to be progressively removed until it was totally abolished in 1854. (84)

Michael Craton wrote that the abolitionists had overestimated "the demographic effects to be expected from a change merely from an annual importation of 2 per cent of the total population to zero". (85) When the former realised that voluntary amelioration was not being adopted, their strategy shifted to achieving amelioration through the use of external authority.

The new policy was initiated in 1823 by T.F. Buxton, leader of the newly formed Anti-Slavery Society, who had replaced Wilberforce as spokesman of the abolitionists in the House of Commons. On 1<sup>st</sup> May that year, Buxton moved for a scheme of gradual emancipation, whereby slave children born after a certain date would be set free. At the same time the lot of the remaining slaves would be improved. (86)

Canning, the Foreign Secretary and Leader of the House, introduced counter-proposals, adopted by a large majority, which called for the adoption of "effectual and decisive measures for ameliorating the condition of the slave population of His Majesty's colonies", so as to prepare the slaves for eventual freedom. The slaves were to be freed as soon as was consistent with their own welfare, that of the colonies, and with the rights of private property. (87)

Canning stated that the reforms would be enforced in the Crown colonies but would only be recommended to the Legislative colonies. These recommendations were opposed by the colonial legislatures and the slave laws eventually enacted by them, either differed in content or were subject to delays in implementation, so that the aims of the British government were largely defeated. (88)

The application of amelioration policy in the Crown colonies became the responsibility of the Colonial Office, under Earl Bathurst until 1827.

From then until the abolition of slavery in 1833, there was a succession of Secretaries of State for Colonies, namely Lord Goderich, who held the appointment twice, William Huskisson, Sir George Murray and E. G. Stanley. (89) In a despatch of 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1823, Bathurst informed the governor of Demerara, General Murray, about the new slave policy which had been formulated in the House of Commons. He called for the passing of legislation by the Court of Policy to end the driving system and the whipping of female slaves. (90) In July a copy of this despatch was sent to the governor of Mauritius, Sir G. Lowry Cole, who was asked to comment on the proposed changes. (91)

At the time, Mauritian slaves were still subject to the Code Noir, as registered in the colony in 1726, and subsequently modified in 1767, and during Decaen's administration. Farquhar claimed to have "endeavoured in every practical instance to alleviate the burden of the slaves . . . by a series of measures to ameliorate their condition, and, to bring into practice a system for their treatment, which must lead to their benefit and comfort". (92) This claim was dismissed by the Anti Slavery Monthly Reporter, which argued that Farquhar had not adopted "any series of measures, nor even any one measure, for ameliorating the condition, and alleviating the oppressions of the slave population." (93)

Cole cannot be said to have had a better record than Farquhar in this respect. He feared that hasty changes would lead to a confrontation between the slave-holders and the administration, as well as to economic ruin. In September 1824, after an inordinate delay, he replied to Bathurst's despatch of the preceding year. In his reply Cole recommended caution and secrecy. He complained that Foisy, the aged government lawyer, lacked the competence needed calling for a suspension of this project until the arrival of the Commissioners of Eastern Inquiry, one of whom, Bigge, had the requisite legal training to undertake that task. (94)

Meanwhile an Order in Council of 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1824, had been framed for the application of the amelioration policy to Trinidad. The order went much further than the Demerara despatch in putting the Bathurst scheme into practice. Its provisions catered for the religious instruction of slaves, limited the masters' powers of punishment, encouraged slave marriages and prohibited the break up of slave families by sale, granted slaves property rights and the right of emancipation by purchase. Moreover, a full time

official, the Protector of Slaves, was appointed to ensure that the law was not broken and to deal with slave complaints, while slaves were permitted to give evidence in court in certain circumstances. (95) The Trinidad Order was used as a model for the Crown colonies in the framing of amelioration laws. These were enacted in 1826, with modifications to suit local conditions or existing legal systems, by the colonies of Berbice, St. Lucia and the Cape of Good Hope. (96) The governor of Mauritius had been instructed to draft an ordinance on the basis of the Trinidad Order. However he believed that the amelioration policy could not succeed if the slave-owners did not support it. He sought the opinion of the Comité Colonial on the application of the order to Mauritius, but the Comité objected to all the measure's major provisions. In attempting to reconcile colonial and metropolitan opinion, Cole amended the original order to an extent that proved unacceptable to the Colonial Office. His ordinance was disallowed by the Secretary of State, William Huskisson, who in a despatch of March 1828, called for the drafting of another measure more in keeping with the original instructions. (97)

Shortly after this, Cole was transferred to the Cape of Good Hope. The years of Cole's administration had witnessed no real improvement in the legal position of the Mauritian slaves, and it is unlikely that the position of the slave in practice had altered very much, if at all. Shortly after their arrival in Mauritius, the commissioners of Eastern Inquiry reported to Bathurst that abuses, such as the unrestricted chaining of slaves, were current, and called for the appointment of a slave protector to check such practices. Probably in response to this, Cole enacted ordinance 50 of 13<sup>th</sup> December, 1826, to regulate the weight of chains and iron implements used in the punishment of slaves. Cole did little else to ameliorate the condition of the Mauritian slave population. The piecemeal measures that he did enact were moreover imperfectly enforced and therefore easily evaded. (98)

The task of amending the draft Ordinance fell to Cole's successor, Sir Charles Colville. The latter followed Cole's policy of sounding colonial opinion on the subject of unpopular legislation. In a memorandum to the 'Committee of Planters and Proprietors' of 18 July 1828, he called for the colonists' view on the application of clauses 12 and 15 of the Trinidad Order

to Mauritius. Clause 12 had abolished the driving system, whereby the leaders of field gangs had carried a whip to stimulate the slaves to labour, and as a symbol of their authority. While prohibiting the use of a cane, Colville suggested that the whip could be replaced by some other instrument "equally grateful to the feelings of the bearer and equally oppressive to the imagination of those under his charge".

Clause 15 called for the recording of punishments, inflicted on slaves, in a special register. The planters had previously objected against this provision on the grounds that very few of the smaller proprietors could write. Colville suggested instead that the owners of the larger estates could keep the records of their smaller neighbours, in return for a small compensation. (99)

The Comité Colonial resolved, on the 6<sup>th</sup> August, that the proposed measures would bring ruin and destruction to the colony. In an attempt to gain time however, it was agreed that selected planters would experiment with the suppression of the whip on their estates, and would submit detailed reports to the Comité on "l'impression que ces innovations feront sur l'esprit des noirs". (100) On the next day however, members of the Comité were amongst the 306 signatories of a short 'mémoire', in which the colonists vehemently opposed Colville's moderate proposals on the grounds that an acceptance of these would foster indiscipline, and would give rise to mutinies. They argued that discipline was everywhere maintained only "par la force ou la superstition (awe)". The proposed measures however, while undermining the authority of the master over his slaves, and promoting insubordination, at the same time prevented him from effectively suppressing this :

"Les mesures proposées rompent à jamais le lien moral qui contient les noirs dans l'obéissance, en multipliant d'un côté les motifs de correction, de l'autre elles la rendent impossible".

The colonists added that, since the safety of their property could not be guaranteed in the undefended countryside, they would find it impossible to accept the proposed legislation and they called on Colville to "suspendre la publication des deux mesures proposées jusqu'à ce le bon plaisir de sa Majesté, mieux informée, soit connu". (101)

In a separate statement, entitled 'Observations sur les Clauses 12 et 15 de l'Ordre en Conseil de 10 Mars 1824 dont la publication est proposée à l'Isle Maurice', issued at the same time, the Comité Colonial reversed their earlier endorsement of a limited experimental application of the measures. They protested that : "ils (les colons) auraient voulu par le respect qu'ils portent à leur Gouvernement... faire l'essai des mesures proposées; mais plus ils y réfléchissent, plus ils y voient des dangers dans l'état actuel des choses; le mal serait sans remède. Elles ne peuvent être adoptées qu'autant... que la loi dans son ensemble présentera des garanties qu'on ne rencontre nulle part".

In their lengthy exposition of nearly 6 000 words, the members of the Comité raised every imaginable objection to the abolition of the driving system, and the keeping of punishment records. They also bemoaned the inadequacy of the island's police force and spoke out against the numerous enfranchisements. (102)

Philip Mason has argued that systems of oppression do not owe their continued existence alone to the use of force by the rulers, but also to two other conditions; namely, that the subordinates "must somehow be led to believe that the system is part of the order of nature and that things will always be like this - that is to say, the very idea of revolution must seem remote or impossible; secondly, they must feel themselves so different from the superior group that they do not compare their own lot with that of their masters." (103)

The members of the Comité Colonial showed a surprising awareness that the cohesion, and stability, of the society they lived in, depended on the fulfilment of these above-mentioned conditions. In the 'Observations' they pointed out that the control one man could exercise over 500 slaves or that 30 000 Englishmen exercised over 30 million Indians, was not attributable simply to force, but more to prestige (cette force inaperçue). But they argued that in the last 18 years this prestige had been eroded in Mauritius by a succession of laws that had reduced the rights of the masters over their slaves. This reduction in their authority, they argued, was the direct

cause of slave indiscipline since it had led to a re-appraisal by the slaves of their masters' social position : In referring to Clause 12, they wrote :

" Que l'on considère en outre l'effet moral de la mesure. Les noirs ne sont ni des légistes, ni des publicistes; ce sont (surtout ceux affectés aux travaux des champs) des êtres grossiers, qui ne sont guidés que par les sens. Dans un commandeur sans moyen de coercition, ils ne verront plus de commandeur; ce ne sera qu'un noir comme eux dégradé de son autorité, Dans un maître dont le commandeur n'a plus d'autorité, ils ne verront qu'un blanc sans pouvoir ... Le maître n'est plus aux yeux des noirs cet homme supérieur, environné d'une sorte de prestige qui fait sa force : le charme est détruit, le premier lien de la discipline est rompu". (104)

It is true that the 'Observations' grossly exaggerated the extent to which the legal basis of planter authority had been reduced. As was noted previously very few, if any, real changes in the slave codes had taken place; while the British government was usually concerned with giving the impression that reforms emanated from the colonists themselves. Nevertheless a keen insight in the psychological foundations of the slave system was shown by the Comité and when the latter announced that : "Si aujourd'hui il reste peut-être encore quelque chose à faire pour l'amélioration du sort des esclaves, il n'en est pas moins vrai que pour les propriétaires la mesure des concessions est comblée",

it was an acknowledgement that not only the legal but also the ethical foundations of the society they had created was under attack. They based its defence on the argument that the insular economy could not withstand the shock of social change. Slaves were not suited for liberty, they said :

"Est libre qui veut : où vont ces cinquante affranchis par semaine, dont on voit les noms sur la gazette ... Esclaves hier, empreints encore des stigmates de l'esclavage, libres aujourd'hui, mais vicieux et corrompus (car la liberté est pour la plupart des esclaves la récompense de leur vols ou du libérinage des femmes), qu'apportent-ils à la société ?

L'oisiveté et les vices qui l'accompagnent ; car tous ne voient dans la liberté que la cessation du travail". (105)

Colville seems to have received such impassioned arguments sympathetically, yet at the same time he had to implement the instructions of the Colonial Office. In an attempt to draw, if not planter-support, at least planter-acquiescence of his actions, Colville issued a proclamation on the 9<sup>th</sup> January 1829 explaining that a new slave code was needed because of the disorganised state of the existing slave laws, many of which had become obsolescent or had never been properly sanctioned by central authority. The appointment of a full time Slave Protector, to assume duties formerly carried out by the Procureur-général, was required, he pointed out, in view of the great increase in the slave population. Thus Colville tried to placate colonial opinion by representing forthcoming legislative changes as responses to administrative difficulties, rather than as part of a concerted campaign of colonial reform emanating from abroad. (106)

On 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1829, Ordinance 43, 'for the amelioration of the condition of the Slave Population in the island of Mauritius and its dependencies' was passed by the Governor in Council. On 21<sup>st</sup> February, Colville sent a copy of the ordinance to Sir George Murray, the Secretary of State. He wrote that it had been formulated, as far as possible on the model of the Trinidad Order, but that deviations from it had proved necessary, given "the opinions, and perhaps even prejudices, which were strong, as well as the real interests of the colony".

For instance, article 12 of the Trinidad Order, abolishing the driving system, was omitted altogether while the quarterly punishment returns were dispensed with. Moreover, whereas Huskisson had recommended that no more than three blows could be inflicted on a slave until 24 hours had elapsed since the latter committed an offence, article XVII of Ordinance 43 raised this to 9 blows. In his despatch to Murray, Colville defended this tripling of the recommended punishment ceiling, in a passage, remarkable for the tortuous logic it displays. He wrote : "We have acted upon the conviction of the futility of the smaller, either as a reparation of ill-conduct in the individual, or as a check to himself or example to others; besides

that to prevent the infliction of more than 3 stripes at the moment, would be to increase to a certainty the punishment of the slave by 4 and 20 hours of expectation of it, ... while it is too much perhaps to expect from our frail nature that the master, irritated by the loss of his slave's labour for so many hours would not add a few lashes to those he would originally have ordered him. "(107)

When the Comité Colonial at first examined the Trinidad Order in Council, in May 1827, it had protested against the appointment of a Protector of Slaves, since the procureur-général was available for the slaves' protection and since the former would be seen as their "blind protector, ... friend and consequently the enemy of slavery, the enemy of our institutions, the enemy of the colony." (108) In terms of article I of Ordinance 43 of 1829, R.M. Thomas esq. was appointed as Protector and Guardian of Slaves, but a government proclamation of 13<sup>th</sup> February, tried to cater for the planters' objections to that post. In the first place, it threatened slaves with the severest penalties if they layed calumnious and groundless charges or even 'frivolous' complaints against their masters. In the second, it insisted that slaves should first report their grievances to the assistant protectors in the districts. These officials would then call for the reply of the masters or overseers and would endeavour to settle the business out of court. Only if the slaves remained unsatisfied would the case be referred to the Slave Protector. (109)

This proclamation ensured that few if any complaints of slaves against their superiors, in connection with their food, clothing or treatment would be heard in practice. It is unlikely that slaves would persist in laying complaints once the masters and overseers had been urged to settle these with them, out of court. Moreover, even though the assistant protector in the districts, the civil commissaries, were paid functionaries, they not infrequently had a stake in plantation agriculture. (110) Finally, even if an impartial assistant protector could be found, he lacked the means of enforcing the provisions of slave amelioration laws. The understaffed district Police was under the control of the 'Commandants de quartier', who were appointed from amongst the leading planters. Moreover, planters ferociously opposed 'domiciliary visitations', which Hall had first initiated

in 1819, an invasion of the privacy of their homes. There was thus no way of establishing, by an on the spot inspection, whether slave complaints were valid or merely 'frivolous'. (111)

Other deviations from the model of the Trinidad Order included the clauses governing the observance of Sunday as a day of rest, the preservation of family unity and slave emancipation.

Article XXXII of the Ordinance which dealt with manumissions hedged the process with bureaucratic obstacles. It called on the persons desirous of emancipating slaves to insert a notice thereof, within fifteen days of a declaration to this effect to the slave protector, in the government gazette. The notice had to be published in three successive gazettes and, if this requirement was not met, the whole process of notification would have to be repeated. Within eight days after the third notice had appeared in the gazette, the person seeking to emancipate the slave or slaves, had to forward a petition, with supporting certificates from the Registrar of Slaves and the Protector, to the Governor. In return a deed of manumission was to be delivered by the registrar of the court of First Instance. But if more than a month was allowed to elapse before the petition was submitted, the three notices of emancipation had to be renewed. (112)

On 7<sup>th</sup> October 1829, Colville enacted Ordinance 53 'for a better fulfilling the end and object, and the more effectually carrying into execution, of the Provisions of the Ordinance in Council of 7<sup>th</sup> February of the present year'. Article IV of this ordinance amended the article in the preceding measure that governed slave emancipation. It acknowledged that "it is necessary to prevent those delays which are occasioned by a compliance with the formalities required by the 32<sup>nd</sup> article of the ordinance of 7<sup>th</sup> February 1829, with regard to emancipations", but it retained the need for three successive notices to be published in the gazette, although it was no longer necessary to petition the governor on the subject. (113) These time consuming formalities were probably a legacy of the French laws governing manumissions. In practice however, enfranchisements were restricted, either because owners were discouraged from freeing their slaves by excessive red tape, or because slave-holders whose claim to ownership was disputed on the grounds of illegal importation or purchase, were given the opportunity of opposing such actions. Unlike the Trinidad Order, neither of these ordinances provided for compulsory manumission by purchase. (114)

Article XV of Ordinance No. 43 had provided for the employment of slaves on Sundays with a proviso that no wages or hire were to be paid for this additional labour. Finally Article XXII laid down that boys under the age of 12 and girls under the age of 15 could not be separated from their parents, but these age limits were lower than in the model code. (115)

Despite Colville's attempts at placating the planters by deviating from the Trinidad Order-in-Council in framing Ordinance 43, he was overwhelmed by their hostile reaction to its publication and to that of the proclamations of 9<sup>th</sup> January and 13<sup>th</sup> February, which defined the manner of its application. Between the 27<sup>th</sup> February and 9<sup>th</sup> March, 1829, ten petitions, protesting against these measures, were sent to him by the planters and merchants of Port-Louis, by the 'Chambre de Commerce de Maurice' and by planters in each of the eight rural districts. In a despatch to the Secretary of State, Colville wrote : "I never had deceived myself or risked the deceiving of others that the ordinance would be well received here but I could not have supposed that after the time the planters have had to prepare themselves for it and the modification it has undergone, it could have been met in the spirit of forced mis representation and ill-will the remonstrances of all the quarters of the island exhibit; several of them appear to be indecorous enough, but one in particular calls upon me to rescind the ordinance and suspend the protector." (116)

As far as can be established, very few women signed the petitions. There were no female signatories in Port Louis and in the Savanne district, and only thirty-one, most of whom were widows, in the rest of the island. A breakdown of the nearly 800 signatures by district indicates that the intensity of support for the anti-amelioration campaign varied from 15 % of the adult white male population of the capital, to up to 79 % in the rural districts. If the number of signatures is expressed as a proportion of the free adult male population (whites and libres), the intensity of support is seen to range from 6 % to nearly 35 %, which is

still impressive, given the short time in which the protest campaign was mounted. (117)

There is little doubt that some 'libres' supported the petitions. The Port-Louis documents bear the signatures of Sindavayat, Savria Savrimouton, Ayaoon Saverimouton (sic) and Neyepa, which suggests that part of the Indian trading community backed the white merchants and land owners of the town. Two of the petitioners in the district of Rivière du Rempart, Bachahissy and R. Teroumoudy, may also have been of Indian origin. (118) It was not possible to identify libres with French surnames from the signatures. However we know that the libres living in the rural areas included a number with land and slaves. It is true that the 1815 census for the Savanne district showed that white land holdings and slave ownership were far in excess of the number of slaves and the extent of land in the hands of libres. Moreover proportionately more whites in the rural areas owned land than did the libres. For instance, in Savanne, two out of three adult white males were planters or landed proprietors as against one out of four libres. (119) Nevertheless the libres' economic importance is said to have been continually increasing during these years. In her 'Recollections', Mrs. Bartrum wrote : " it is said that they (the free coloured) are fast rising to importance as a wealthy portion of the community, while the whites are decreasing in riches proportionably; they have, of late years, evidenced a great desire for the progress of education amongst their own class. "(120)

Twenty years later Rev. Patrick Beaton said that : "It has been calculated that three-fourths of the immoveable property in the colony is now in possession of the coloured people. "(121)

A case can thus be made for assigning a political role to the property-owning libres, and for arguing that shared class interests may have prevailed over ethnic divisions. However full participation by libres in the anti-amelioration campaign was probably hindered by the erection of artificial ethnic barriers, which had prevented them from participating in public life, during Decaen's administration. Legislative discrimination was only abolished in 1830, and this quarter-century of entrenchment of white social and economic privilege may well have reduced the potential for inter-racial co-operation on the basis of common economic interest. But there are nevertheless signs that white and libres property owners sought

to form a common front against external attacks on the institution of slavery. (122)

The petitions were directed against both the substance of the amelioration policy, and the manner in which Colville proposed to implement it in the colony.

The petitioners argued that the amelioration laws would foster disobedience and indiscipline among the slaves, threatening ultimately their property and their lives. In a country where commerce was intimately linked to agriculture, they argued, the dislocation of agricultural production would lead to a crisis of confidence, the depreciation of landed property and an outflow of men and capital. The Port-Louis petition went as far as to ask : "Ne peut-on pas craindre de voir se renouveler ici les malheurs des Antilles?"(123)

These alarmist views were based on the notion that slaves were unable to appreciate the benefits of freedom. All the petitions gave an unfavourable assessment of the slave character. Thus the Chambre de Commerce predicted that the extension of privileges to "des hommes sans civilisation, sans frein religieux, sans morale" would lead the latter to surrender "à une licence et à des excès". The slaves numbered amongst "les classes les moins éclairées et conséquemment les plus dangereuses" according to the Moka petition. Finally, the proprietors of Grand Port, in criticising the slave protector for planning to allow slaves to select their own spokesmen, wondered that : "Si parmi les peuples civilisés, religieux, les délibérations de la basse classe ne peuvent produire que des troubles, (et l'Europe nous en offre le triste spectacle), quels seront les fruits d'une délibération de nègres irrités à tort ou avec raison ? y peut-on penser sans frémir."(124)

On the premise that the slaves were unsuited for freedom, the petitioners criticised specific articles of Ordinance 43. For instance, they argued that agriculture would suffer, since cultivation would have to be interrupted whenever the planter had to defend himself against calumnious charges. The planters rejected the 24-hour rule, whereby punishment beyond a maximum number of strokes had to be delayed for 24 hours, on the grounds that contemplation of the forthcoming chastisement would induce

the slaves to desert. Since the only means of preventing this, was to imprison the latter for the 24 hours, the planters argued that they would invariably suffer a loss of labour as a result. The keeping of punishment record books was seen as a ploy to obtain evidence for use against the planters ; while the provision, in article 21 of the Ordinance , for one free man or six slaves to attend punishments as witnesses, was seen as leading to situations demeaning to the slave-owners. If the registers were used to verify the factual basis of certain complaints, an undesirable confrontation between master and slaves, be they complainants or witnesses, would result. This would dissolve the bond of dependency linking the latter to the former, they claimed. They warned against introducing : "dans une colonie florissante et tranquille ... une loi dont beaucoup d'articles doivent en opérer la désorganisation, en détruisant l'opinion, qui jusqu'à ce jour, a présenté à l'esclave dans la personne de son maître ... celui ... dont dépendait son existence."(125)

In a similar vein the planters of Moka alledged that "le protecteur et la loi tentent à nous déconsidérer aux yeux de nos esclaves." The planters of Savanne echoed the 'Observations' of the Comité Colonial, in predicting that : "les désordres ... seront la suite inévitable (de la loi, No. 43), que désormais privés du prestige qui soumettait plusieurs centaines d'individus à un seul, et sans moyens de repression personnels..."(126)

The proclamations of 9<sup>th</sup> January and 13<sup>th</sup> February were also attacked. A provision for the selection of spokesmen to represent slaves sharing common grievances was condemned, Colville was told, because once slave meetings made the latter aware of their numerical superiority, "nous serons sacrifiés, dans nos malheurs."(127)

For the same reason, the planters denounced the Slave Protector's project of calling two or three slaves from each plantation, to the office of the assistant protector in each district where he was to address them on the nature and extent of the amelioration laws " so as to avoid the misconstruction into which ignorance or other causes may otherwise lead them. "

The planters warned that "La police des colonies ... a toujours évité de mettre en contact immédiate un nombre trop considérable d'esclaves; ils paroisoit imprudent de leur montrer leur supériorité numérique, et de leur donner la conscience de leur force."(128)

In his circular of 17<sup>th</sup> February 1829, R.M. Thomas, the Protector and Guardian of Slaves, had also stipulated that " in all cases where a slave has a complaint to make, he must in the first place apply to you (the assistant protectors) for which purpose the owner or manager of the plantation is strictly enjoined to furnish him immediately with a pass. "

This stipulation was found to be obnoxious because it undermined the authority of the slave-owners. (129)

The petitioners argued that the amelioration measures were "attentatoires au droit sacré de la propriété." They observed that the memorandum presented to the government on the subject of the applicability of the Trinidad Order-in-Council in the colony had stressed the principle that, in compensation for the loss of planter authority, there should be an increase in government measures to ensure public order :

"Que la loi, enlevant au maître une partie de ses pouvoirs, lui doit rendre en sécurité ce perd en autorité. "

There was a need, it was argued, to retain the slaves "dans une juste subordination, par les répressions le plus sévères." Severe penalties were required against calumnious charges and indiscipline and regulations against desertion and "le vagabondage" had to be framed. To enforce these laws, the Police force had to be strengthened and rejuvenated: it did little to maintain order. The petitioners of Grand Port stated that :

"La police générale, celles des quartiers, devoient suppléer à l'impuissance où l'on a réduit le propriétaire, mais il n'en est malheureusement rien; de jour, de nos noirs peuvent sans repression errer sur les routes, les balisages, porter leurs vols dans les asils impurs, ouverts à chaque pas au recel, à l'intempérance et à tous les excès." (130)

Serious crime was on the increase in Mauritius, according to the petitioners, because of the erosion of the masters' authority and the partiality shown by the police and magistrature towards the slaves. Moreover, the police force was said to be unequal to its task. In the 'Observations' we are told that in the district of Pamplemousses, where there were 10 000 slaves, "la

police y est confiée à un commissaire civil, un suppléant, un commandant de quartier, un adjoint, brigadier et six gend'armes. Cependant on y compte plus de 50 lieues de rassemblements et plusieurs grandes routes. Les six gend'armes .... peuvent-ils entretenir l'ordre partout? ... La chose est impossible."(131)

It was mentioned previously that the colonists had formed a corps des volontaires, a sort of private army to ensure their security and to suppress any attempt at revolt on the part of the slaves. The effectiveness with which a minor uprising was put down in the 1820's suggests that the corps des volontaires was an adequate means of preserving internal stability. The recurrent calls for a better police force and severer laws, to keep the slaves in a state 'de soumission, de respect et d'obéissance à leurs maîtres', therefore seem a bit out of place. However there are indications that the slaves were increasingly unwilling to bear the yoke of slavery. Desertions were reportedly everywhere on the increase and lay behind the repeated demands for vagrancy laws. (132)

Mauritian slave-owners said that their problems had to be taken into account by the king's chief Ministers. The island's trading importance made it Britain's third-ranking possession. Moreover, they wrote, "notre droit de propriété est incontesté et incontestable ... Si nous avons pris toutes les charges de citoyens Anglais, nous en avons également acquis tous les privilèges. Et nous y joignons ceux si sacrés, d'une capitulation qui nous a assuré nos lois et nos coutumes."(133)

To preserve their property, they believed that "des lois fortes et repressives" were needed, but all laws originating abroad had to be modified to suit locality, customs and circumstances. Although their opinion had been sought for, on the amelioration laws, these had been published "on pourrait le dire sans modifications". At this point the Mauritian colonists clearly showed their resentment at being excluded from the law-making process. They complained that while they paid taxes, they were "repoussés des assemblées d'où émanent les réglemens qu'on nous dicte", or again, that they found "leurs observations rejetées entièrement humiliés de n'être

jamais consultés sur des lois d'où dépendent leur fortune et leur existence."(134)

On 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1829 Colville sent a circular memorandum, to the commandants and civil commissaries in the districts, to allay the fears of the petitioners, and in response to their "extravagant remonstrances." He stated that no material deviation could be tolerated from a system, for the government of slaves, which the King's Ministers had intended to introduce in all the British sugar colonies. However, he assured the colonists that "no further concessions to the slaves are contemplated by this local government." The colonists had been rash in opposing the laws at the outset, given the attitude of the metropolitan authorities : "Having passed in the King's name, and by His express command, they must be executed; but after certain experience then will be the time for soliciting the repeal or modification of such clauses as may have been found injurious in a real not supposititious sense."(135)

Colville then attempted once again to win the approval of the colonists for the amelioration policy. He assured them that the Protector would not renew his attempts to explain the new laws to slave gatherings in the districts. Instead, as provided for in the government order of 9<sup>th</sup> January, the masters should inform their slaves about the content and nature of the new measures themselves, as this would in all likelihood be most acceptable to the former and "most natural and beneficial to the latter."

On the subject of the district police, Colville explained that in some areas there was no apparent need for an increase in police numbers. Elsewhere the chief obstacle was that "of obtaining individuals of proper character and conduct." The Governor welcomed the views of the commandants and the notables of the districts on this matter. He promised his support for keeping the slaves under "a firm though not severe course of discipline" and was prepared to sanction the formation of a colonial militia. He would allow the colonists : "if necessary to add... to the armed force of the district."

As soon as the Eastern Inquiry Commission had submitted its report to the home government, Colville claimed, he would be in a position

to meet local demands for laws that would ensure the maintenance of public order. He wrote : "Let them have but a little patience, and the planters will see the Slave Amelioration Ordinance followed up by others for that of the Marronage and Cantine laws, for the repression of vagabondage, and for the establishment of a more efficient police." (136)

Colville's attempts to reconcile metropolitan and local interests, in the application of slave amelioration policy to Mauritius, failed. As was shown above, the planters rejected his attempts out of hand. The Colonial Office not only opposed the deviations from the model Trinidad Order in Ordinance 43, but also criticised Colville for prescribing how the ordinance should be applied in practice.

On 4<sup>th</sup> September, 1829 Sir George Murray, the Secretary of State, wrote to Colville on the subject of the "remonstrances ... from the merchants and proprietors of the different quarters of the island." He reserved criticism of the Ordinance 43, confining his despatch<sup>1</sup> to a review of the course pursued... in carrying the new slave code into execution.<sup>1</sup> (137)

Murray took exception to the aspects of the government proclamations of 9<sup>th</sup> January and 13<sup>th</sup> February, which had the effect of alarming the planter. (138) He ordered Colville to revoke these measures, as well as the circular letter of the Slave Protector, which had "rather embarrassed than promoted the execution of the law." He stated that the colonists were bound initially to suffer some inconvenience as a result of the slave amelioration policy and recommended that it would be best to overlook their vehement opposition to it, since they had "every claim upon the forbearance of the Ministers of the Crown which can be derived from their prevailing ignorance of our language and civil institutions, and from the magnitude of the interest which they have at stake in the colony."

He added that to oppose the colonists, and to convince the latter that their apprehensions were without any real foundations, the central government was prepared to make "any concession which does not compromise the principles nor diminish the efficiency of the law itself." However Murray dismissed the planters' demands for some degree of political autonomy at the local level. He castigated Colville for having referred the instructions of Secretary of State Huskisson on the amelioration policy "to the self-

constituted society assuming the title of the Committee of Planters and Proprietors. "(139)

At the beginning of August 1830, Colville received a despatch from Sir George Murray which stated : "that the order made by yourself, with the advice of the Government of Mauritius, dated the 7<sup>th</sup> of February 1829, has failed in many respects to give effect to the instructions conveyed to Sir Lowry Cole, in Mr. Huskisson's despatch of the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 1828. "(140)

However Murray did not discuss the failings of the ordinance, as it had been superseded by an Order-in-Council of 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1830 " for consolidating the several laws for improving the condition of the slaves in H.M.'s colonies of Trinidad, Berbice, Demerara, Saint-Lucia, Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius. " To prevent a recurrence of earlier delays, Murray specifically instructed Colville that the application of the law could not be postponed for more than six weeks. Accordingly it was proclaimed on 9<sup>th</sup> September, 1830 : it regulated the lives of Mauritian slaves until emancipation.

In several respects the measure was an improvement on Ordinance 43. Sunday markets were absolutely prohibited and the governor was ordered to appoint a weekday for the purpose of such markets. Slaves were not liable for Sunday labour, except for the 'performance of any work of necessity'. Moreover, to prevent 'continual evasions of the law', the governor was directed to define precisely every possible instance in which slaves might be employed on Sunday. In contrast with Ordinance 43, it was stipulated that Sunday labour had to be paid for, as 'the slave is entitled to some just consideration from the owner to whom his services are rendered'. Slaves had to agree voluntarily to perform Sunday work, and the Protector had to be given previous notice, or in case of an emergency, notice within 48 hours, of the owners' intention of employing their slaves on such days.

The Order-in-Council laid down that only slave children above the full age of sixteen could be separated from their parents (clause IV). The most striking difference between the two amelioration laws lay in the provisions relating to manumission. Clauses XXXII and XXXIII of Ordinance

43 had impeded rather than facilitated enfranchisements. The Order-in-Council, by contrast, dealt at length with the subject, introduced provisions designed for the protection of the slaves being emancipated, and authorised compulsory manumission by purchase (clauses LII - LXIX). (141)

Despite its improved features, the Order-in-Council was less than suitable as the instrument of amelioration policy. Murray himself acknowledged : "that there are some topics connected with the improvement of the condition of slavery which are omitted in this order, although superior in importance to those which it embraces. Amongst these I may particularly mention the duration of the daily labour of plantation slaves, their food and clothing, and above all their religious instruction. If it had been the design of His Majesty's Ministers to frame a complete code for the government of slaves, a prominent place must have been assigned to topics of this nature. But for the present nothing further has been contemplated than to consolidate the Order in Council of the 10<sup>th</sup> March 1824, and the most valuable of the provisions which have been been ingrafted upon it by colonial enactments either in Mauritius or the other Crown colonies." (142)

Colville had been granted the powers to "publish Proclamations with a view to the defining and fixing such matters and things as should not be sufficiently determined by the said order." On 22<sup>nd</sup> September 1830, a proclamation was issued, which amended the Order-in-Council "after a due inquiry into the best means of reconciling the execution of the said powers with which His Excellency is thus invested." In his despatch to Sir George Murray of 7<sup>th</sup> October 1830, Colville voiced the hope that the proclamation "will have been dealt with in a manner likely to meet your approbation : some little attention to local circumstances was absolutely indispensable the spirit of His Majesty's Order-in-Council has in no instance, I hope, been departed from." (143)

The incompleteness of the Order-in-Council of February 1830 and these further local adaptations prompted the despatch of a revised measure - the Order-in-Council of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 1831 - to the colony. The Order, which reached Mauritius at the end of March 1832, granted a right of visit to the Protector, which secured his admission to the plantation with

or without the owner's consent. Health care was regulated by the setting up of medical journals on the estates, and the work-day was limited to six hours for pregnant slaves, the young and the aged, under fourteen and over sixty years of age respectively; and to nine hours for other slaves. Two rest periods were incorporated into the work-day and night work was regulated. (144) Toussaint says that this order was never enforced in the Colony. (145)

The receipt of the Order-in-Council of February 1830 in the island in August of that year and of rumours of intended reforms in February 1832, gave rise to widespread protests. From 1830 onwards the amelioration issue became overshadowed by, and inexorably intertwined with the question of slave emancipation. \* This newly perceived threat explains in large measure the increasingly bitter opposition of the planters to the amelioration laws.

The success of the slave amelioration policy depended in the final analysis on the willingness of the slave-holders to accept it, and on the willingness, as well as the ability, of the local government to enforce it. As we have seen, these conditions were missing in Mauritius : the planters vehemently opposed the amelioration laws, the governors were torn between the need to implement the directives of the Colonial Office and to retain the support of the principal inhabitants of the colony, the higher officials had in many cases become part of the colonial establishment, and the police force was notorious for its small size and inefficiency. Despite the zeal of a handful of men like R.M. Thomas, the Slave Protector, the amelioration policy did not succeed in Mauritius. Not only were many of its provisions evaded, but it failed to secure that improvement in the material and spiritual lot of the slaves, which British legislators believed was an essential precondition for ultimate emancipation.

Perhaps the best measure of this failure is that slave manumissions failed to increase markedly after the promulgation of the Order-in-Council of 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1830, as can be seen in Table 5, 2 below. (146)

\* Because of these close links, the anti-amelioration campaign after 1830 is examined together with that against slave emancipation in Chapter 6.

TABLE 5, 2.      Annual Average Number of Manumissions 1826 - 1834 .

1826 - 1829	351
1830 - 1834	447

This was a far cry from the fifty manumissions gazetted each week, as claimed in the 'Observations' of the Comité Colonial. But the slaves could feel the breeze of approaching freedom and many opted for desertion rather than endure a system of oppression which was becoming increasingly intolerable. Flight rather than rebellion was their response to slavery. B.H. de Froberville reported that in the eight months before April 1832 "the number of slaves having become maroons ... is estimated at 3 000". (147) This was more than the total number of manumissions since October 1826 !

Notes to Chapter 5.

- (1) It was later argued in the House of Commons that the capitulation treaty of 3<sup>rd</sup> December, 1810, had been superseded by the Treaty of Paris of 1814, in terms of which the island was ceded to England.  
cf. Toussaint, A. Port Louis . . . . . - Op. cit. , p. 229  
Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions . . . . . - Op. cit. , pp. 133, 137
- (2) Ibid, p. 137  
Napal, D. - Op. cit. , pp. 7-9
- (3) Ibid, p. 9.  
Toussaint, A. Les Missions . . . . . - Op. cit. , p. 137.
- (4) Napal, D.
- (5) cf. Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions . . . . . Op. cit. , passim.
- (6) Société de l'Histoire de l'île Maurice, Dictionnaire de Biographie Mauricienne, The Standard Printing Est. , Port Louis, no. 18, March 1946, pp. 223-224.  
Toussaint, A. Les Missions . . . . . - Op. cit. , pp. xiii, xix, 132, 136.
- (7) Barnwell, P. J. - Op. cit. , pp. 224-225.  
Toussaint, A. Les Missions . . . . . - Op. cit. , p. xxi.
- (8) Address to Governor Sir Charles Colville, dated 5 April, 1832 quoted in full in letter of Adrien d'Epinau to Lefevre, dated London, 9<sup>th</sup> January 1834 in Toussaint, A. Les Missions . . . . . Op. cit. , pp. 97-98.
- (9) Ibid
- (10) Ibid p. 99.
- (11) Toussaint, A. Les Missions . . . . . - Op. cit. , p. xx . In June 1832 some colonists in the Grand Port district planned to ambush the 87<sup>th</sup> Royal Irish fusiliers, but the attack was foiled by the regiment marching two hours earlier than usual. A trial ensued and dragged on for two years but the accused were found to be not guilty. Mauritian writers have tended to emphasise the verdict rather than the allegations of conspiracy, for which evidence was not lacking. (Barnwell, P. J. - Op. cit. , p. 280)
- (12) Kuczynski, R. R. - Op. cit. , pp. 765, 778 .  
Barnwell, P. J. - Op. cit. , p. 280.

- (13) Dictionary of National Biography Smith, Elder & Co., London, 1887-1895. vol XI, pp. 418-419; vol XL1, pp. 44. It also earned Nicolay the dislike of local historians. cf. note 15, below.
- (14) Letter of Sir G. Lowry Cole to Lord Goderich, dated 25 July 1832 cited in Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions . . . . - Op. cit., p. 151.
- (15) Toussaint, A. Port-Louis . . . - Op. cit., p. 308.  
Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions . . . . - Op. cit., p. xxv. Nicolay's position in Mauritian historiography is clearly illustrated in the following quote taken from A. Toussaint's Port Louis : Deux Siècles d'Histoire : "Ce gouverneur, dont on a pu dire avec raison qu'il n'avait jamais fait le bien et jamais empêché le mal, n'a laissé au Port-Louis, comme souvenir de son administration, que le Fort Adélaïde, élevé comme nous l'avons indiqué, dans le but de réprimer une révolte imaginaire des citadins - acropole inutile dont les canons redoutables n'ont jamais servi qu'à tirer des salves de réjouissance ou à signaler les incendies aux habitants de la ville, et qui . . . achève aujourd'hui de mourir sans histoire sur la colline où bien peu de Port-Louisiens se soucient d'aller le regarder de près!"(p. 312)
- (16) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions . . . - Op. cit., pp. XX-XXI  
Toussaint, A. Port-Louis . . . - Op. cit., pp. 301-306.
- (17) Froberville, B.H. Ephémérides Mauriciennes 1827 - 1834, Port Louis 1906 pp. 99-100, cited in Toussaint, A. Port-Louis . . . - Op. cit., pp. 304-305.
- (18) Ibid,
- (19) Jeremie left on 28th July 1832, cf. Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions . . ., p. XXI.
- (20) Knaplund, P. James Stephen and the British Colonial System 1813-1847. The University of Wisconsin Press, Madison, 1953, p. 45.
- (21) Despatch of Sir W. Nicolay to Mr. Sec. Stanley, dated Mauritius 5<sup>th</sup> June 1834 in Parl. Papers (144) 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1836 p. 14.
- (22) cf. Chapter 6, below.
- (23) cf. Chapter 4 and also Knaplund, P. - Op. cit., p. 100.  
Further examples of the stake of high officials in sugar-cultivation will be given. Note that in the first two or three decades of British rule, some high officials, and most officials holding medium-rank positions, were recruited locally.
- (24) Davis, D.B. - Op. cit., p. 278.

- (25) Jeremie, J. Recent Events at Mauritius by John Jeremie, attested also by John Reddie, Esq., London, 1832 (British MS press mark 8154, e.) pp. 15,25.
- (26) Hunt, K.S. - Op.cit., p. 65.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., p. 790-791 referring to dispatches of Governor R.T. Farquhar to Earl of Liverpool dated 8 January and 15 February 1811.
- (27) Ibid.
- (28) Ibid.  
Hunt, K.S. - Op.cit., p. 65.  
Pridham, C. - Op.cit., p. 154.
- (29) Mellor, G. - Op.cit., pp. 239-240. The Commission was appointed in 1823 to inquire into the state of the settlements of the Cape of Good Hope, Mauritius and Ceylon, which had been acquired by Britain during the Napoleonic Wars. The Commissioners arrived at the Cape in June 1823. In 1826 they left for Mauritius, but one of them, Bigge, had to stay behind because of a leg injury. (p. 275 n.6.)
- (30) Toussaint, A. Histoire des Iles Mascareignes ... - Op.cit., pp. 177-181.
- (31) Toussaint, A (ed) Les Missions .... - Op.cit., p. XII.
- (32) 'A Picture of the Negro Slavery ...' - Op.cit., p. 4.
- (33) Ibid. pp. 3-4.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. pp. 712,761,767.  
James Prior cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit., p. 21.
- (34) 'A Picture of the Negro Slavery ....' - Op.cit., p. 5.
- (35) Ibid, p. 6.
- (36) Vicars, Capt. Calumny exposed or Observations on Number XLIV of the Anti-Slavery Monthly Reporter in a letter addressed to Sir. Hon. Dike Acland, Bart, M.P., County of Devon, with Appendix. James Ridgway, London 1831, pp. 27-32. Vicars commented: "by this line of argument we might infer that ... the parish in which the Middlesex hospital stands might be more pestilential (if possible) than, Sierra Leone." (p.32).  
Vicars also remarked on the downward bias in slave returns made to the collector of taxes. (p. 30.)
- (37) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., p. 766. The number of slaves seized varied from year to year as can be gauged from the Table below.

Number of Slaves Seized and Apprenticed in Each Year from  
1813 to 1822, in 1825 and 1826.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Year</u>	<u>Number</u>
1813	31	1819	131
1814	66	1820	59
1815	573	1821	297
1816	206	1822	2
1817	645	1825	236
1818	162	1826	1

Altogether 2 986 were seized, but 577 of these were not apprenticed. Instead nearly 40% of them enrolled for military service, while the remainder died or were missing before being apprenticed.

- (38) cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit., p. 196.
- (39) Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit., pp. 218, 220.  
Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions... - Op. cit., p. 138
- (40) The civil commissaries in early 1821 were A. Bourgault du Coudray (Moka district), Delville (Pamplemousses), Icéré (Plaines Wilhems), A. Mangeol (Riv. du Rempart), Suasse (Rivière Noire) and Blaucaud (Savanne). Icéré spoke of his "private sphere of connection with the greatest proprietors" in his district.  
cf. Despatch of R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, dated 28<sup>th</sup> February 1821, Parl. Papers (244) 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1825, pp. 23-32.
- (41) Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit., p. 220.
- (42) cf. Parl Papers (244) 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1825, pp. 24-25.
- (43) Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit., p. 219.
- (44) cf. data on seizures of illicitly imported slaves n. 37 above. Hall presumably failed to secure the support of other officials for his 'new broom' policy. cf. Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit., passim.
- (45) Despatch of R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, dated Port-Louis, 26<sup>th</sup> July 1820, Parl. Papers (244) 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1825 p. 6.
- (46) calculated from Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit., pp. 761, 771.  
cf. also Chapter 2 above.
- (47) Deschamps, H. - Op. cit., p. 154.  
Heseltine, N. - Op. cit., p. 100.

- (48) Ibid, pp. 97,99.
- (49) Deschamps, H. - Op.cit., p. 154 Farquhar was appointed commercial resident at Amboina c. 1797. He was subsequently named lieutenant-governor of Penang and in 1802 was made commissioner in charge of arranging the return of the Moluccas to the Batavian Republic. Farquhar remained several more years in the Far East. cf. Dictionary of National Biography, Vol VI, Oxford University Press, London, p. 1088.
- (50) Deschamps, H. - Op.cit., pp. 154-155.
- (51) Ibid.  
Hall estimated that the expenditure on the Madagascar scheme in 1817 amounted to the enormous sum of 73 000 dollars. He refused to pursue this costly policy, even though he had been told to by Farquhar. cf. Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit., p. 218. The silver Spanish dollar or piastre was equivalent to 4 shillings c. 1830. (cf. Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions... - Op.cit., p. 199) and to 4s 2 d ten years later (cf. Pridham, C. - Op.cit., p. 386)
- (52) Deschamps, H. - Op.cit., pp. 155-161.
- (53) cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit., p. 218.
- (54) cf. Map in Deschamps, H. - Op.cit., p. 161.
- (55) Gaston-Martin - Op. cit., p. 264.  
Lloyd, C. The Navy and the Slave Trade : the Suppression of the African Slave Trade in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. Frank Cass & Co. Ltd., London, 1968, p. 197.
- (56) Ibid.  
Pridham,C. - Op.cit., p. 158.
- (57) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., pp. 791 n.5, 908-909.  
Hunt, K.S. - Op.cit., p. 70.
- (58) cf. Parl. Papers (556) 11 July, 1823, pp. 22-27.
- (59) Despatch of R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, dated 16<sup>th</sup> July 1822  
Parl. Papers (166) 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1825, p. 64.  
Despatch of R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, dated 11<sup>th</sup> June 1821.  
Ibid. pp. 40-41.  
Despatch of R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, dated 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1821, Ibid, p. 52.  
Letter of Major-General Darling to Earl Bathurst dated 15<sup>th</sup> June, 1823. Ibid, p. 76.

- (60) Oliver, R. & Mathew G. (eds) History of East Africa vol I, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1963 pp. 156-161. Note that despite Sayyid Said's alliance with Britain, the British supported the Mazrui in Mombasa against Omani attacks from December 1823 to October 1826.
- (61) Lloyd, C. - Op.cit., p. 198.  
Parl. Papers (544) 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1823, p. 25.
- (62) Letter of Capt. C.R. Moorsom, dated Bembatooka Bay, 17<sup>th</sup> July, 1824 Parl. Papers (166) 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1825, p. 7.
- (63) Parl. Papers (544) 10<sup>th</sup> July, 1823, pp. 25, 29, 30.  
Gaston-Martin - Op.cit., p. 264.
- (64) Letter of Capt. W.F. Owen to J.W. Croker, Esq., dated Mauritius, 19<sup>th</sup> June 1824 Parl. Papers (166) 29<sup>th</sup> March, 1825, p. 3.
- (65) Gaston-Martin - Op.cit., pp. 249-255, 263-278. The French slave trade was abolished on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1815, but the prohibition was very imperfectly enforced in French colonies.
- (66) Ibid, pp. 262, 266.
- (67) Letter of R.T. Farquhar to Marquis Hastings K.G., Governor General in Council, dated 11<sup>th</sup> May, 1821 Parl. Papers (244) 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1825. p. 49.
- (68) Letter of Capt. F. Moresby to R.T. Farquhar, dated Zanzibar, 7<sup>th</sup> August 1821, Ibid. p. 50.
- (69) Letter of R.T. Farquhar to Marquis of Hastings K.G., Governor General in Council, dated 28<sup>th</sup> September, 1821, Parl. Papers (244) 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1825. p. 49.
- (70) Letter of H. de Freycinet to Sir G. Lowry Cole, dated Saint-Denis 11<sup>th</sup> January, 1824 Ibid, p. 79.  
Letter of H. de Freycinet to Sir G. Lowry Cole, dated Saint-Denis 26<sup>th</sup> January 1824, Ibid. pp. 80-81.  
Despatch of Sir G. Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, dated 20<sup>th</sup> April, 1824, Ibid. pp. 77-78.
- (71) Letter of Capt. W.F. Owen to J.W. Croker Esq., dated Mauritius, 19<sup>th</sup> June, 1824 Parl. Papers (166) 29<sup>th</sup> March 1825, p. 3.
- (72) Despatch of R.T. Farquhar to Imaum of Masqat dated 10<sup>th</sup> July 1822 Parl. Papers (244) 25<sup>th</sup> April 1825, p. 66.
- (73) Despatches of R.T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, dated 26<sup>th</sup> July 1820 and 4<sup>th</sup> December, 1821 Parl. Papers (244) 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1825, pp. 5, 48-51.

- (74) Despatches of R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, dated 26<sup>th</sup> July 1820; 28<sup>th</sup> February 1821 and 12<sup>th</sup> March 1821. Ibid pp. 5, 24, 33. Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , p. 33.
- (75) Despatch of R. T. Farquhar to Earl Bathurst, dated 12<sup>th</sup> March 1821, Ibid. pp. 33-34.
- (76) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , pp. 767, 771.
- (77) Despatch of Sir G. Lowry Cole to Earl Bathurst, dated 18th November 1824 Parl. Papers (244) 25<sup>th</sup> April, 1825, p. 82.  
cf. Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , pp. 69-71.  
cf. Chapter 4 on rising slave prices as indirect evidence of a decline in the illicit slave trade in the 1820's. Lamusse states that slave prices rose to 700 - 800 piastres after 1825. (Lamusse, R. 'The Economic Development' - Op. cit. , Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'Île Maurice II, vol. 43,2 (1964) p. 114 cf. also Pitot, A. Ile Maurice.... - Op. it. , II, p. 91.
- (78) cf. Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , pp. 842-843.
- (79) Ibid, p. 908
- (79b) cf. Chapter 6, note 2 on this.
- (80) Holland Rose, M. et al. (eds) - Op. cit. , pp. 308-309.
- (81) cf. Chapter 5 ,2 above on the illicit slave trade.  
cf. Sheridan, R.B. 'Sweet Malefactor' : The Social Costs of Slavery and Sugar in Jamaica and Cuba 1807- 54' Economic History Review 2<sup>nd</sup> series vol XXIX, 2 (May, 1976) on the impact of the ending of the slave trade on the profitability of sugar-growing in Jamaica, where the slave population and the plantation labour force was subject to natural decrease. The somewhat meagre evidence on Mauritian slave prices suggests that the volume of the illicit slave trade was sufficiently large to prevent labour scarcity from becoming a real problem in the island, until the second-half of the 1820's, cf. Chapter 4, above.
- (82) Craton, M. - Op. cit. , pp. 196, 197.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , pp.
- (83) cf. Appendix
- (84) Sheridan, R.B. - Op. cit. , p. 238-240, 243-244, 246.
- (85) Craton, M. - Op. cit. , p. 267.
- (86) Ibid, p. 273.  
Holland Rose, M. et al. (eds) - Op. cit. , p. 316.

- (87) Ibid,  
cited in Craton, M. - Op. cit. , p. 267.
- (88) Holland Rose, M. et. al (eds) - Op. cit. , p. 316-318.
- (89) Knaplund, P. - Op. cit. , p. 30.
- (90) Holland Rose, M. et al (eds) - Op. cit. , p. 317.
- (91) Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , p. 71.
- (92) 'A Picture of the Negro Slavery....' - Op. cit. , p. 2.
- (93) Ibid.
- (94) Hunt, K.S. - Op cit. , pp. 71-72.
- (95) Holland Rose, M. et. al (eds) - Op. cit. , pp. 318-320.  
Green, W.A. - Op. cit. , p. 103.
- (96) cf. Article 1 of Order-in-Council for consolidating the several laws recently made for improving the condition of the slaves in his Majesty's Colonies of Trinidad, Berbice, Demerara, Saint-Lucia, the Cape of Good Hope and Mauritius, 8 February, 1830.  
Holland Rose, M. et al (eds) - Op. cit. , p. 370.
- (97) Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , pp. 72-73.  
Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray, dated 21<sup>st</sup> February 1829, Parl. Papers (676) 16 July 1830. p. 117.
- (98) Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , pp. 73-75.  
Despatch of Viscounth Goderich to Sir C. Colville, dated 28 February 1831 in Parl. Papers (230) 10 March, 1831, p. 128.
- (99) Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray, dated 21<sup>st</sup> February 1829 Parl. Papers (676) 16 July 1830 pp. 136-137.  
Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , p. 74.
- (100) Extrait du Registre et des Délibérations et Arrêtés du Comité Colonial in Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray, dated 21<sup>st</sup> February 1829 Parl. Papers (676) 16 July 1830, p. 147.
- (101) 'Mémoire des habitans de l'île Maurice, réunis en assemblée générale à Sir C. Colville', dated 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1828 in Ibid, pp. 137-138.
- (102) 'Observations.....' - Op. cit. , Ibid pp. 140-147.
- (103) Mason, P. - Op. cit. , p. 11.
- (104) 'Observations.....' - Op. cit. , Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray dated 21<sup>st</sup> February 1829, Parl Papers (676) 16 July 1830 pp. 140,144.
- (105) Ibid, pp. 140,146.  
Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit. , p. 73.

- (106) Government Order, dated Port Louis 9<sup>th</sup> January 1829 in Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray dated 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1829 Parl. Papers (676) 16 July, 1830 pp. 133-134.
- (107) Ibid. pp. 117-119.
- (108) Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit., pp. 73-74.
- (109) Ordinance 43, 7<sup>th</sup> February 1829, articles I, VII.  
Government Notice, 13<sup>th</sup> February 1829, in Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray, dated 21<sup>st</sup> February, 1829, Parl. Papers (676) 16 July, 1830, pp. 135.
- (110) cf. Chapter 5, 1 and note above.
- (111) The office of 'Commandants de quartier' was a legacy of French rule, under which the Commandants had headed the militia of each district or quartier. Under the British, the militia had been abolished and the Commandants appointed as the titular heads of the police générale. cf. Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray, dated 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1829 - Parl. Papers (676) 16 July, 1830, pp. 146, 168, 177.  
Toussaint, A. L'Administration Française.... - Op. cit., p.
- (112) cf. Ordinance No. 43, of 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1829.
- (113) cf. Ordinance No. 53 of 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1829.
- (114) cf. Chapter 3 on the attitudes of Mauritian planters to manumissions under Decaen. As seen in this section (p. 41) such attitudes were still firmly held two decades later.
- (115) cf. Ordinance No. 43 of 7<sup>th</sup> February, 1829.
- (116) Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray, dated 11 April, 1829 Parl. Papers (676) 16 July 1830. pp. 169, 182.
- (117) calculated from Ibid, pp. 165-183 and from Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit pp. The colonists were taken by surprise by the publication of these measures. An indication of the lack of preparedness of planters is shown by the fact that in the larger districts, where organisational problems were more difficult, the intensity of support, as measured by the ratio of signatures to population was lowest. In the case of Grand Port, the district with the largest free adult male population, only 66 signatures were collected for the petition of 1<sup>st</sup> March 1829. A second petition, drawn up on 17<sup>th</sup> March, bore however no less than 171 signatures cf. Despatch of Sir Colville to Sir George Murray, dated 11<sup>th</sup> April 1829 Parl. Papers (676) 16 July 1830 pp. 171, 178-182.

- (118) Ibid, pp. 167,174.
- (119) Toussaint, A. 'Le Domaine de Bénarès....' - Op.cit., p. 45, Unienville, M.C.A.M. baron d' - Op.cit., III, pp. 345, et seq., Tableau No. 19; and Milbert, M.J. - Op.cit., II, p. 233.
- (120) A Lady - Op.cit., pp. 156-157.
- (121) Beaton, Rev. P. - Op.cit., p. 16.
- (122) cf. Chapter 3 above; Barnwell, P.J. & Toussaint, A. - Op.cit., p. ; Pitot, A. Ile Maurice : Esquisses Historiques 1828-1833 R. de Spéville & Cie. Port Louis, 1914; Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions.... - Op.cit., p. xv
- (123) Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray, dated 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1829 Parl. Papers (676) 16 July 1830, pp. 164-166, 172.
- (124) Ibid, pp. 165,168,178.
- (125) Ibid, pp. 175-176.
- (126) Ibid, pp. 169,182 (One of the Savanne petitioners was Henry Adam, a member of the Comité Colonial, who may have drawn up part of the 'Observations')
- (127) Ibid. p. 169
- (128) Ibid. pp. 178,185.
- (129) Ibid, pp. 166,185.
- (130) Ibid, pp. 168,170,174,179. The petitioners of the Rivière Noire district gave a grossly exaggerated description of the crimes supposedly committed by the slaves, which they blamed on the inefficiency and partiality of the police force. (p. 177).
- (131) cf. 'Observations' - Op.cit., p. 248.
- (132) cf. Chapter 5, 1 above.  
Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray dated 11<sup>th</sup> April, 1829 Parl. Papers (676) 16 July 1830, p. 177.
- (133) Ibid. p.
- (134) Ibid. pp. 168-171.
- (135) Memorandum of Sir C. Colville, dated 10th March 1829 in Ibid,pp.162-4.
- (136) Ibid p. 177.
- (137) Despatch of Sir George Murray to Sir C. Colville, dated Downing Street, 4<sup>th</sup> September 1829 Parl. Papers (676) 16 July 1830, p. 194.
- (138) He criticised, in particular, the provisions of the above-mentioned proclamations which called on slaves to elect their own representatives, to assemble at the offices of the assistant protectors to be informed

about the amelioration ordinance, and which authorised the latter to issue passes to the slaves without first seeking the owners permission. He also objected to a clause, stating that factually inexact complaints would not lead to the punishment of the complainants, as it conflicted not only with the amelioration ordinance, but also with a further provision of the relevant proclamation that 'groundless or frivolous accusations' would be severely punished. Ibid. pp. 194-197.

- (139) Ibid.
- (140) Despatch of Sir George Murray to Sir C. Colville dated Downing Street, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1830, Ibid. p. 198-201.
- (141) Ibid.  
Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir G. Murray, dated Mauritius 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1830 Parl. Papers (230) 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1831, pp. 121-124.
- (142) Despatch of Sir George Murray to Sir C. Colville dated Downing Street, 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1830, Parl. Papers (676) 16 July, 1830, pp 200-201.
- (143) Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir G. Murray, dated Mauritius 7<sup>th</sup> October 1830, Parl. Papers (230) 10<sup>th</sup> March 1831 pp. 121-124.
- (144) Mathiesen, W.L. - Op. cit. , pp. 200-201.  
Jeremie, J. - Op. cit. , pp. 29, 31, 33.
- (145) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions... - Op. cit. , p. XIX n. 2
- (146) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , pp. 763-764.
- (147) cited in Ibid, p. 764.

Appendix to Chapter 5

(a) Percentage Composition of Slave Population of Mauritius, according to Age, Sex and Place of Birth 1826-1827.

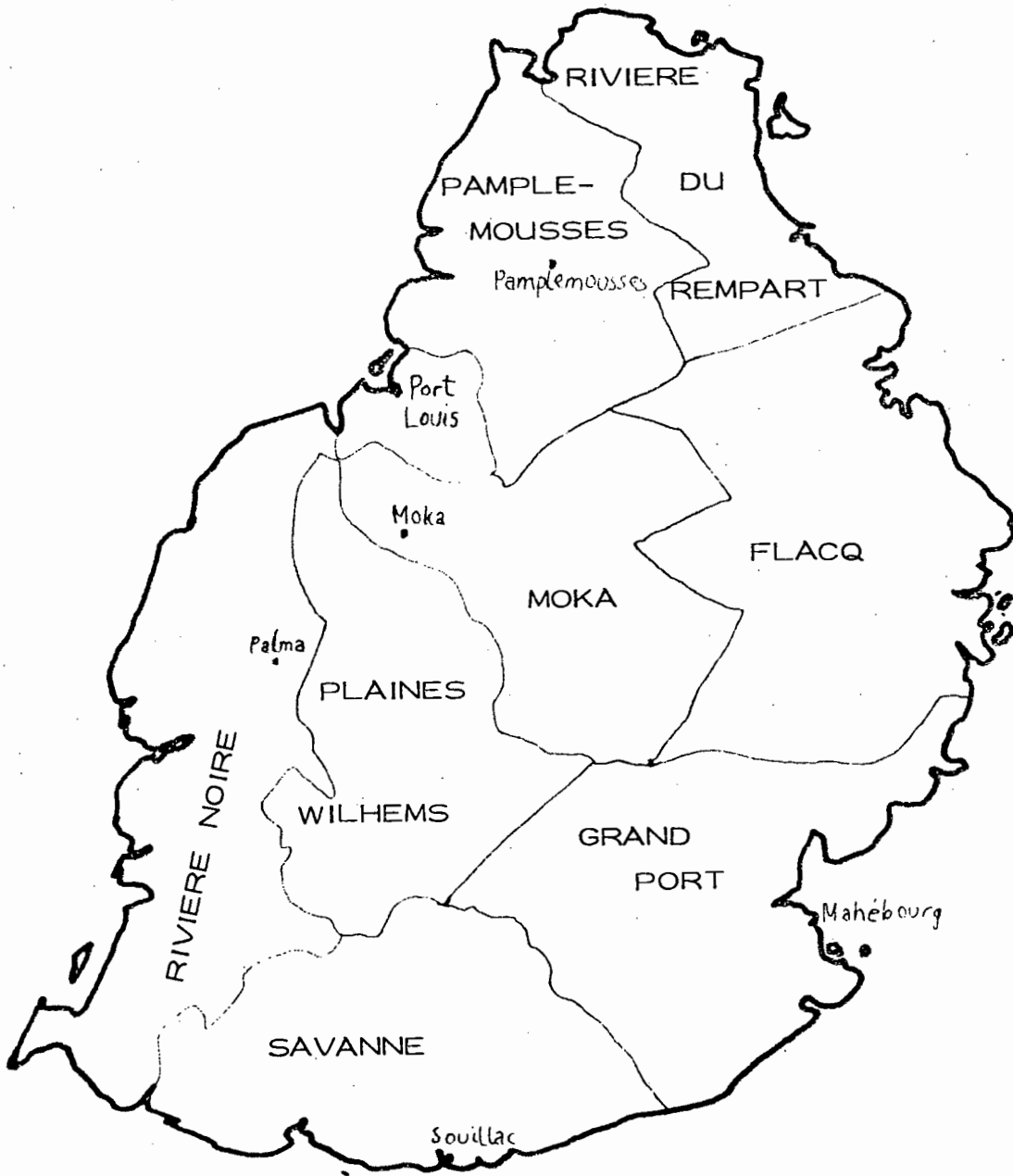
<u>Age-Group</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Locally-born Slaves</u>	<u>Foreign-born Slaves</u>	<u>Total</u>
0 - 7	males	6,4 %	-	6,4 %
	females	6,6	-	6,6
7 - 11	males	3,7	-	3,7
	females	3,8	-	3,8
12 - 16	males	3,5	0,2 %	3,7
	females	3,4	0,1	3,5
17 - 60	males	11,3	35,1	46,4
	females	11,2	12,4	23,6
over 60	males	0,1	1,3	1,4
	females	0,1	0,7	0,8

Total Number of Slaves = 69 264.

(b) Percentage Composition of Total Population of Mauritius, according to Age, Sex 1944.

<u>Age-Group</u>	<u>Sex</u>	<u>Total Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
0 - 7	males	40 687	9,7
	females	40 208	9,6
8 - 11	males	19 227	4,6
	females	18 060	4,5
12 - 16	males	23 170	5,6
	females	23 214	5,6
17 - 60	males	118 998	28,5
	females	115 064	27,6
over 60	males	7 493	1,8
	females	10 545	2,5
Total		417 575	100

Map 4 : Districts of Mauritius



## CHAPTER 6

### Labour Problems during the Years of Emancipation and after 1830 - 1842.

#### 1. The Threat of Emancipation.

In the second half of 1830 there were widespread rumours in Mauritius that Britain, misinformed by the Commissioners of Eastern Inquiry, who had recommended that from twenty to thirty thousand of the Mauritian slaves be set free because they had been illegally introduced into the island, was contemplating a wholesale emancipation of slaves in the colony. On the 17<sup>th</sup> May, Sir George Murray told the House of Commons that the illicit traffic in slaves had persisted until 1821 in Mauritius. But although the Colonial Office believed that slaves who were enslaved, in contravention of the law, should be set free, it took no immediate decision upon the 'delicate subject' of slave emancipation. (1)

The arrival of a copy of the Report of the Commission of Eastern Inquiry in Mauritius, in October 1829, led to the convening of a general assembly of the inhabitants in Port Louis and to strong protests. (2) When the colonists learnt of the House of Commons' deliberations of May 1830 however, public indignation reached a much higher pitch. Five weeks earlier, the consolidated Order-in-Council of 2<sup>nd</sup> February had reached the colony and was being considered by the Governor-in-Council. The reforms, actual and supposedly intended, produced a state of violent agitation in the island. (3) In despatches, written in September and October, Colville called for military reinforcements to maintain public order in the face of a growing disregard for government authority, "if not an intention of disobeying the laws" on the part of the colonists, and to ward off "the possibility of tumult, if not of outrage and danger". (4)

The colonists assembled once again in Port-Louis on the 17<sup>th</sup> September and drew up a petition, attacking the new measures, which was taken to the Governor. Apart from the by-now familiar complaints about the dangers of the amelioration policy, the petitioners made an outright call for internal self government. John Jeremie, who was Procureur-General

of Mauritius in 1832, and again from 1833 to 1834, recorded that the inhabitants : "insisted on obtaining as their right the abortive constitution or representative assembly of 1791 ... and declared in substance that they would no longer conform to any law or ordinance which had not been passed by themselves."

Colville did not treat these threats as seditious, but returned the petition to the colonists as 'irregular', and tried to appease them by stating that he had received no instructions, from the home government, on the subject of slave emancipation. (5)

Jeremie argued that the political demands of the Mauritians were to some extent inspired by the July Revolution of 1830 in France, which was being "widely quoted as a precedent worthy of imitation". One of the leading members of the Comité Colonial, the advocate Evenor Dupont, was sympathetic to the liberal reformists who wanted to replace the constitutional monarchy with a democratic republic in France. Dupont's political thinking may have been moulded by his stay abroad, as he had studied law at Edinburgh and Paris from 1822 to 1827. In 1830 he demonstrated his support for the Paris revolutionaries by sending gifts to the French satirical poet or chansonnier, Béranger, for distribution to the wounded of the revolution. (6) But this was an atypical case : the bulk of the colonists were unlikely to see more in the July uprising, than an act of defiance against established authority. Their political demands must be judged essentially as a response to what they perceived as threats to their privileged economic and social position.

On the day after the colonists met in Port Louis to discuss the events of May, or on the 18<sup>th</sup> September 1830, the Comité Colonial resolved to send Adrien d'Epinaÿ to London to defend colonial interests. On the 30<sup>th</sup> of that month, it authorised him, in the name of the colonists, who had sent in petitions from all the districts, "de porter aux pieds du Trône les doléances de la Colonie, et, spécialement sur la proposition de Messieurs les Commissaires d'Enquête de rechercher les esclaves prétendus introduits depuis 1814 (et) de démontrer l'injustice et la fausseté du rapport des Commissaires d'Enquête." (7)

A week later the twenty members of the Comité Colonial signed their final instructions to the 'député de Maurice en Europe'. The instructions

établies et augmentées journallement par une simple ordonnance. Sans contrôle, sans participation des contribuables, ne constituent-elles pas l'arbitraire le plus complet le plus oriental tandis que le pavillon anglais flotte sur nos rives sans nous protéger ?"

The form of taxation which was found most hurtful was the export duty of 1 shilling per quintal on sugar. The 'Instructions' pointed out that in 1830 the selling price of sugar was 11 shillings the quintal. After the costs of packing, storage and loading were deducted, only 8 shillings per quintal remained to pay this duty : "somme bien peu relative aux frais d'exploitation". This complaint was coupled with one directed against the high rate of interest prevailing in the colony. (11)

Fourthly, the colonists refuted the claims of the Commissioners of Eastern Inquiry as libellous and dangerous, and opposed the partial emancipation scheme which the Ministry was reported to be contemplating. They argued that Mauritian slave-owners had acquired their slaves by private purchase, through inheritance, by purchase from the Crown, or by the importation - with government authority - from the Seychelles. Some slave-owners had title to their slaves on the basis of the first slave registration of 1815, but many others neglected to have their titles of ownership confirmed, they argued, because these were seen as serving no purpose. The colonists pointed out that many proprietors had subsequently acquired title to their slaves in 1826, as a result of a government order instructing them "de représenter au greffier tous les esclaves qu'elle (la population entière) possédait à quelque titre que ce soit ... le Gouvernement sur la représentation de ces esclaves, a donné postérieurement aux propriétaires un titre imprescriptible, aux moyens de coupons transmissibles avec des formalités. Ces coupons dispensaient dans les transactions de titres antérieurs."

They added that many planters, with limited education, may have disregarded this call, but to deny the validity of the titles acquired by the remainder was inequitable, an act of bad faith that would ruin the plantations and plunge the colony "dans le dédale de procès interminables." (12)

The colonists opposed the scheme of emancipating illegally-introduced slaves, on the grounds that its provisions would be abused.

They wrote : " L'esclave à quelque époque qu'il ait été introduit, présentera en vertu du dernier Ordre en Conseil, un certain nombre de ses camarades esclaves, comme témoins irrécusables de son introduction vraie ou fausse.

Ce sera un service à charge de revanche. "(13)

The colonists continued that, if the local tribunals turned down the slaves' representations, these would be taken to the Privy Council in England, where they were likely to succeed since "les frais de pour suite obligent dès lors, le propriétaire à se desister. "

Finally, the freeing of foreign-born slaves was likely to lead to an uprising of locally-born slaves, who could not be expected to carry the yoke of slavery alone. (14)

In conclusion, the 'Instructions' stated : "Pour nous maintenir comme colonie productive, il faut donc que nos droits et notre propriété soient maintenus par une reconnaissance et des garanties inattaquables : que les impôts soient fixés d'une manière équitable, et en proportion avec les dépenses nécessaires : enfin, que l'intérêt soit réduit à un taux qui puisse donner aux débiteurs la faculté de s'acquitter. "(15)

Even before the threat of emancipation materialised, d'Epinaï had attempted to rally the libres to the side of the white plantocracy. For instance, in July 1828, "un article d'Adrien d'Epinaï, paru dans la gazette du 5, faisait appel à l'union de toutes les classes pour l'intérêt commun". Montvert, a prominent libre, replied to this call by stating : "En tout temps et en toutes circonstances, nous serons disposés à nous réunir pour le bien général. Unis par les mêmes intérêts, nous le serons également par les sacrifices. "(16) From about 1830, the extension of civil rights to the libres, and the threat of slave emancipation without compensation, led to greater cooperation between the white and libres slave holders. Toussaint says that, on d'Epinaï's departure for England : "Il avait été un moment question que M. Auguste Icery, membre de la population de couleur, accompagnerait également le député pour représenter les intérêts de sa population mais, au dernier moment, il avait été retenu par ses affaires. "(17)

D'Epinaï left Mauritius, on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 1830, and arrived

in London, on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 1831. During the voyage he drew up a 'Mémoire des Colons de l'Île Maurice', which he presented to Lord Goderich on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1831, and in which he dealt with the colonists' grievances in some detail. He repeated the argument that, while the colonists were taxed excessively and denied a say in local government, the administration was following policies which were leading the colony to certain ruin. He complained that "les habitants de cette petite Colonie gémissent sous le poids d'une dette énorme" as a result of excessive taxation, exorbitant interest charges and high brokerage fees.

D'Épinay drew up an expenditure and revenue account for a hypothetical sugar plantation of 169 hectares, with 100 slaves, a well-kept sugar-mill, and which produced 150 metric tons of sugar a year. Situated in the best district of the colony, such an estate would be worth 80 000 piastres or £16 000 he said. He also assumed that the planter's debt amounted to 20 000 piastres or to a quarter of the value of his property. D'Épinay's estimate is summarised in Table 6,1 below. (18)

According to the estimate, for each 100 piastres earned on the sale of sugar, only 26 went to the proprietor. The remainder was used to pay slave maintenance costs (19 piastres), interest charges and brokerage fees (25 piastres), managers' salaries (12 piastres), livestock purchases (4 piastres) and sugar-mill running costs (4 piastres). Several expenditure items, such as health care (500 piastres), bed linen for slaves etc. (155 piastres), salaries for two managers (1 400 piastres), and packaging (800 piastres) seem grossly inflated. Not all plantations had a resident surgeon, nor even a hospital. Sugar was usually packed in bags woven, by the young, invalid, or aged slaves, from the leaves of the vacoas (*Pandanus utilis*) which was grown on the plantations. There was little need for "un administrateur" and "un administrateur d'intérieur" at a time when absentee planters were not yet a feature on the Mauritian agricultural landscape, while the overseers employed, were unlikely to have commanded a higher salary than that of the resident surgeon (150 piastres). (19) A gross return of 3,9% and a net return of 1,4% on capital invested seems incredibly low! Nevertheless this illustration was used by d'Épinay to emphasise the low profitability of sugar-growing, the burden of planter indebtedness and the need for reforms. He claimed that the selling price of sugar, on which his estimate was based, was "le meilleur prix pour le

sucre de qualité supérieure. Il est donc évident que le planteur doit se considérer bien heureux quand les revenus arrivent à couvrir les dépenses".  
(20)

TABLE 6, 1.      D'Epinay's Estimate of the Profitability of Sugar-Planting  
in Mauritius c. 1830.

<u>I. EXPENDITURE</u>		
1. Annual Slave Maintenance Costs		
<u>Food</u> 400 sacks of rice @ 4 piastres ea.	1 200	
<u>Clothing</u> 200 sets of clothing @ 2 piastres ea., bed linen etc.	555	
<u>Health Care</u> salaries of surgeon & orderlies	300	
Special foodstuffs, wine, clothing for sick slaves	200	2 255
2. Running Costs of Sugar-mill (cost of slave labour excluded)		500
3. Cost of Replacing 6% annual loss of livestock		500
4. Salaries for two managers		1 400
5. Packaging	800	
Freight	450	
Brokerage fee of 5%	600	1 850
6. Interest on Debt of 20 000 piastres at 12 %		2 400
	<u>Total EXPENDITURE</u>	<u>8 905</u>
<u>II REVENUE</u>		
Sale of 150 metric tons of sugar net of duty		12 000
<u>Less</u> EXPENDITURE		8 905
GROSS PROFIT		<u>3 095</u>

Twelve days before d'Épinay's arrival in London, Lord Ripon, the Secretary of State, had replied to Colville's despatches of September and October of the previous year, on the subject of slave emancipation. He rejected Colville's suggestions, clearly favouring planter interests, that illegally imported slaves be confirmed as the property of their present owners, and that "any declaration of their freedom might be denounced as a violation of the rights of property."

Ripon stated that these men had been detained in slavery in contravention of the Act abolishing the slave trade: "their title to freedom is as absolute and undeniable as that of yourself or any white inhabitant of the King's dominions."(21)

Ripon instructed Colville to see to it that every reasonable facility be given, by the Protector, to slaves who had been illegally imported, with the proviso, that the need to give the complainants a fair hearing had to be reconciled with the planters' apprehensions that their interests would be overlooked: "The negroes ought to be convinced that their interests will thus be adequately provided for, and their rights effectually asserted and enforced. The free people ought to feel that . . . all due discretion will be exercised in the application of this process."

The Secretary of State had a poor opinion of the impartiality of local courts. He believed that local court officials could not be immune to the violent agitation that had surrounded the question of slave emancipation in the colony. Moreover, in a statement which was diametrically opposed to the views of the Comité Colonial on the matter, Ripon argued that an appeal to the Supreme Court or to the Privy Council: "would be cumbrous, tedious and expensive; and a negro held in slavery, destitute of friends, ignorant of law, and totally unprovided with pecuniary resources, could scarcely ever expect to enjoy the benefit of it."(22)

Lord Ripon suggested that the Vice-Admiralty Court, which had been constituted to try cases of slaves captured at sea, could be given the additional task of dealing with complaints of unlawful enslavement. The Court had a record of efficiency, he said, and it was headed by Judge

Blackburn, a man of experience and integrity, so that : "before a judgment seat so filled ... His Majesty's government is of opinion that equal justice may be done."(23)

The Secretary of State's expectations, that illegally imported slaves would be treated fairly, were not realised. At the same time, as stated in Chapter 5, the amelioration laws were evaded. Resistance to these measures ranged from a failure to register slaves or keep punishment record books, to threatening assistant protectors, visiting the plantations, with physical harm. These breaches of the law went largely unpunished. Jeremie estimated that more than 2 400 cases under the amelioration laws had not been followed up. He believed that this was primarily due to the great influence which the slave-owning class exerted on the local government. The Comité Colonial, which was organised on an ad hoc basis in 1827, was turned into a permanent body holding regular meetings in the capital and with sub-committees, known as 'Sociétés d'Agriculture', in the country districts. Recommendations of the Comité were submitted to the governor, and while it had no legal standing, it had much the same influence on the island's administration as an elected or representative assembly would have had. This was partly because it had initially been formed with Colville's blessing and encouragement. The weak-willed governor was subsequently unwilling to suppress the Frankenstein monster which he had helped to create. (24)

It was mentioned previously, that many of the government officials had acquired a stake in Mauritian society, and were less than zealous in implementing regulations potentially prejudicial to their economic and social interests. As this situation also prevailed, to a greater or lesser extent, in the other British sugar colonies, the home government, concerned with the full application of its amelioration policy, adopted the principle, as early as 1826, that higher administrative and judicial officials in the colonies should have no pecuniary interest in slave cultivation. However, in Mauritius, the coincidence of interests between planters and administrators increased, rather than weakened, after that date. Many officials speculated in sugar plantations, as estate land doubled or tripled in value, during the boom which followed the equalisation of sugar duties in 1825 : "the officers of government and the governed, the judges and the suitors became subject to the influence of the same overwhelming interest."(25)

It should be pointed out at this stage that while the British government was committed to ameliorating the condition of the slaves in the colonies and to eventual emancipation for a variety of reasons, there was no intention on its part to disrupt the social order and even less to harm the colonial economy. This concern for social stability was apparent in Sir George Murray's criticisms of Colville's proclamation of 13<sup>th</sup> February, 1829. The identification of British with colonial economic interests was strengthened, as Mauritius grew in importance as a sugar supplier to the home market, and as the island became increasingly able to defray the costs of local administration from internally-raised revenue.

At the dawn of the British occupation, Sir James Prior voiced the belief that in a financial sense Mauritius would prove to be "a deadweight . . . a more than millstone round our necks." He remarked that while colonial revenue under Decaen, raised by duties on colonial produce, from customs, and taxes on houses and slaves, amounted to some £70 000, the "annual expense of a well-regulated government in Mauritius would have been nearly two hundred thousand pounds." Prior's judgment remained applicable to the first eighteen years of British rule. The accumulated excess of colonial expenditure over colonial revenue from 1811 to 1823 was £1 645 652. While part of this massive deficit was due to the "system of irregularity and confusion" which prevailed in the island, the removal or suspension of officials suspected of embezzling funds, such as Theodore Hook and George Dick, the auditors-general, and Colonel E. Draper, the collector of customs, were not enough to bring colonial accounts in the black. Despite the ending of Farquhar's prodigality with government funds, as evidenced by his costly Malagasy adventures, there was little room for an improvement in colonial finances in the direction of retrenchment. Instead it seems that the problems of government finance in Mauritius were due primarily, to the lack of sufficient sources of internal funds. (26)

Mauritius remained British after the Napoleonic wars, while Réunion was returned to France, for purely strategic reasons. As Knaplund put it: "Concern for the trade with India led Britain in 1814 to retain the Cape of Good Hope taken from the Dutch, and the former French possessions of Mauritius and the Seychelles . . . By annexing the island Britain further safeguarded the trade routes to the east and her power in the eastern waters became really paramount."

One imagines that until the 1820's, the British held on to Mauritius purely for strategic reasons. (27) With the expansion of sugar exports, especially after 1825, the situation changed dramatically. A shortfall of £63 166 in the colonial accounts in 1823 gave way to a surplus of £6 523 in 1828. Figures for subsequent years tell the same story. In 1835 public revenue amounted to £187 780 and internal colonial expenditure was £177 740, which left a surplus of £10 040, which was paid into the accounts of the colony in the métropole. Meanwhile duty paid by Mauritian sugar on entry in England rose nearly sixfold to £ 631 000, from 1825 to 1832. (28) Mauritius had not become so valuable to England as to prevent an application of anti-slavery measures in the colony. At the same time, a metropolitan concern for continued social stability and economic progress in the island was reflected in the pronouncements of successive Secretaries of State and governors throughout the post-1825 period. One example of this was Murray's criticism of Colville's proclamations in 1829. When d'Epinaÿ was in London two years later, he wrote to Pierre Lucas, that even though the Whigs, who were staunchly pro-abolitionist in opposition were now in office under Earl Grey, their stance had been mollified by the responsibilities of government :

"tenant les rênes du Gouvernement, et ne pouvant se dissimuler que la question d'abolition est une question de vie ou de mort pour les colonies, nos intérêts seront défendus par les chefs mêmes du parti qui nous a toujours été opposé... Notre politique à nous autres Colons, est donc de faire cause commune avec le Gouvernement. Pour tout ce qui tient aux droits des propriétaires, son intérêt et le nôtre sont les mêmes."

The investment of British merchant capital in the Mauritian sugar industry may have influenced the British government's attitude to property interests in the island. In March 1831, d'Epinaÿ told Lord Goderich, during an interview, that unless the stability of Mauritius could be guaranteed by the necessary reforms, the interests of London bankers and traders, with capital in the island would be jeopardised. Immediately after this meeting, the Secretary of State gave an audience to a party of English capitalists who spoke to him on behalf of the colony, and amongst whom were Barclay, Saunders and Webb. It was after this second interview that the Secretary of State announced the setting up of a Legislative Council in the colony. (29) As for the governors, as will be shown below, even the severe Nicolay

upheld property interests during the period of apprenticeship.

To ensure the effectiveness of slave amelioration policies in the island, article 3 of Ordinance 43, and, article 5 of the Consolidated Order-in-Council, stipulated that the Protector of Slaves could not own slaves, or land cultivated by slave labour, nor could he have any interest or mortgage in such slaves or land. In his despatch forwarding the Consolidated Order to Colville, Murray wrote : "You are empowered by the 5th clause to permit the protector to hire domestic slaves, if he shall satisfy you that it is not in his power to hire free servants. It is of so much importance to rescue this officer from every temptation to offend against the execution of which he is charged, that you will not dispense with the general rule, except in case of evident necessity, nor to any greater extent than may be clearly unavoidable. "

Murray also stated that delivery of the Protector's half-yearly report should precede payment of his salary, adding : "this is a regulation of so much importance to the effective execution of the whole law, that it cannot be observed with too much exactness. "(30)

An Order-in-Council of April 1831, promulgated in Mauritius on the 16<sup>th</sup> August 1831, prohibited judges of the appeal court, the judge and 'suppléant' of the court of first instance, the procureur-general and the judge of the court of vice-admiralty and his 'suppléant' from being:

"the proprietor of any slave, or have any share or interest in any land cultivated by the labour of slaves, either directly or by any person or persons as a trustee or trustees for him. "

These members of the judiciary were declared incompetent to act as "manager, overseer, agent or attorney of, for, or upon, any plantation or estate within the said island or its dependencies. "(31)

Adrien d'Epinau was in London when he heard about the April order. On the 6<sup>th</sup> June, he wrote to Lord Goderich in protest against the measure, which he said, was not only insulting to the colonists, but was also likely to prove ineffective, as many newly-appointed magistrates

would merely register their slaves under the names of their friends and would remain slave-owners. The aim of the measure was to obtain impartial judges : "Mais, cette partialité que l'on craint peut naître de mille autres causes. Si le juge n'est pas propriétaire d'esclaves sa femme, ses enfants, ses parents, ses amis, tous ceux auxquels il porte intérêt peuvent l'être. L'intérêt de ceux qui nous sont attachés est tout aussi fort que le nôtre, et peut, aussi bien que celui-ci, nous faire manquer à nos devoirs et à nos serments . . . . La mesure sera donc sans effet tant que cet autre intérêt existera. "

Thus, as d'Epinaÿ himself openly acknowledged, so long as Mauritius was dominated by slave interests, judges were unlikely to remain impartial. (32)

The April Order notwithstanding, Jeremie reported that the magistrates, appointed under its provisions, were all, except one, "concerned in slave property or slave cultivation". Judge Blackburn was reported to have invested in property cultivated by slaves in March 1830. Eighteen months later, Blackburn transferred his mortgages to the merchant H. Barlow for 'ready money'; according to the contract, but it was believed that the transfer was more nominal than real. As for the Procureur-general, he was none other than Prosper d'Epinaÿ, Adrien's elder brother, who had received legal training in France. (33)

In the morning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> November, 1831 a large crowd gathered in Port-Louis to hear Adrien d'Epinaÿ, report on his mission to England, from where he had returned to the colony less than two weeks before. He announced that on the 17<sup>th</sup> April, he had been informed by Lord Goderich in person, that the colonists were to be admitted to the Legislative Council and to the Civil Service, on the grounds of merit alone. Censorship would be abolished, an efficient police was to be established, especially in the countryside, and the sale of spirituous liquor was to be curtailed. (34) At a meeting in July, the Secretary of State informed him that the freedom of the Press was to be limited by laws against libel and other abuses, and that the Legislative Council was not to be elected by the colonists but nominated by the governor. Although d'Epinaÿ feared that Council nominees could become "l'instrument du pouvoir", he urged his compatriots to accept these limited concessions : "le Ministre va vous rendre des droits politiques dont nous sommes depuis longtemps privés..

Prouvons par notre obéissance aux lois que nous méritons des institutions libres et constitutionnelles, et que nous n'en abuserons jamais."(35)

D'Epinaÿ had not obtained a representative Council, nor had he returned with "a written pledge that the law should not take its course with regards to slaves imported illicitly", but the latter issue had been dealt with to d'Epinaÿ's satisfaction, and he did not even mention it in his report to the assemblée générale of 2<sup>nd</sup> November. As early as 16<sup>th</sup> March, 1831, he had written to the Comité Colonial : "Je considère la question de 1814 (la prétendue traite) comme entièrement gagnée."(36)

The nominated Council was in any case a considerable victory for the plantocracy, which gained a formal voice in government. The composition of the first council of seven officials and seven nominated members, which first met in January 1832, was very favourable to planter interests. The nominated members were Adrien d'Epinaÿ and J. Gaillardon (Port Louis), Pierre Lucas (Flacq), Charles Millien (Pamplemousses), Edouard Pitot (Rivière du Rempart) Antoine Bestel (Grand Port) and Laurent Barbé (dependencies). The quartiers of Moka, Rivière Noire, Plaines Wilhems and Savanne had no representatives because of their smaller population. There were four resident-planters on the council, and d'Epinaÿ, who represented Port Louis where he practiced as an attorney (avoué), owned the sugar-estate of Argy at Quatre-Cocos. Gaillardon, the other member for Port-Louis, was a wealthy trader but he had been a member of the Comité Colonial until October 1830, when he was expelled from that body after a disagreement, over the powers to be delegated to d'Epinaÿ on his mission to England. However Gaillardon soon renewed his friendship with d'Epinaÿ, with whom he founded the 'Banque de Maurice' in December 1831. Three of the nominated members, d'Epinaÿ, Lucas, and Edouard Pitot were active members of the Comité Colonial. Pierre Lucas, the Comité's president, had been both secretary and president of the 'Assemblée Coloniale' during the Revolution and, had been delegated by that body to confront the Commissaires Baco and Burnel in 1796 over the question of slave emancipation. The doyen of local politicians, Lucas, was widely respected and staunchly pro-colonist .(37)

The officials on the Legislative Council were the Chief-judge, E. Blackburn; the garrison commander, Lieut-Colonel W. Staveley; the

Colonial Secretary, G.F. Dick; the Collector of Customs, Col. E.A. Draper; the Advocate-General, J.J. Cooper; the Procureur-Général, P. d'Épinay; and R.M. Thomas, the Slave Protector.

Perhaps only R.M. Thomas amongst the official members could not be identified with the plantocracy. (38) Nothing needs to be added to what has been said about Prosper d'Épinay's allegiances. G.F. Dick, the Colonial Secretary, according to the census of 1825, owned an estate of 63 hectares, on which he grew manioc and sugar-cane, and held 29 slaves, in the district of Plaines Wilhems, where he had been Commandant from 1821 to 1823. Dick was one of the founders of the 'Banque de Maurice' in 1831, and later won fame as a sugar-manufacturer and owner of the well-run Phoenix estate. Despite his metropolitan origins, Dick, who had been in the colony since 1811, had become a member of the colonial establishment, and was strongly identified with sugar interests.

Like Dick, Colonel E.A. Draper had arrived in Mauritius soon after the British conquest, and had become integrated in colonial society. As was stated above, Judge Blackburn may have had an interest in slave property. Thus perhaps as many as four of the seven official members of the Legislative Council were closely allied to the plantocracy, and the same was true of the seven nominated members. Referring to the latter, John Jeremie, wrote: "these persons, independently of other official members who were impelled by the same interests, gave this faction at once a permanent and commanding influence in the colonial legislature." (39)

At the end of March 1832, the Mary reached Mauritius with a copy of the amelioration Order-in-Council of November 1831 and news of John Jeremie's nomination as Procureur-General in the place of Prosper d'Épinay. The planters drew parallels between these events and those of 1796 when Baco and Burnel had been sent to the colony from the métropole to enforce the decree of 16 pluviôse, An II. Jeremie arrived in the island on the 3<sup>rd</sup> June. On the 28<sup>th</sup> a petition was presented to the governor for the former's recall. This address was shown to Jeremie who refused to leave his post as it would amount to placing "the efficient office in the hands of a thorough-paced slaveholder." (40)

At a public meeting on the 7<sup>th</sup> July, A. d'Épinay moved for an order to remove the Procureur-General. While Jeremie was supported by

four official members of the Council, he was opposed by the seven nominated members, by Colonel E. Draper, who seconded d'Epina's motion, and by Judge Blackburn, who argued that unless Jeremie resigned: "the sugar crop of that year would be sacrificed." As Jeremie commented, three years later, "the appeal was to honour, the response was, sugar quite a new species of slogan - and the crops triumphed." (41)

Colville followed the advice of the majority of his Council. He was intimidated perhaps by 'l'inertie', the general strike organised by d'Epina; and the activities of the Comité Colonial, which is said to have doubled its membership, changed its name to the 'Committee of Public Safety' and sat permanently, from the 4<sup>th</sup> June until the day of Jeremie's departure. The latter left the colony on the 28<sup>th</sup> July, 1832, after having been ordered by the governor to proceed to England. (42)

The British government viewed this incident seriously, recalled Colville and replaced him with the sterner Nicolay. Draper was removed from his post, d'Epina was expelled from the Legislative Council and Jeremie was reinstated. The corps des volontaires was disbanded and, several months later, the Comité Colonial was dissolved. (43)

On hearing of the severe measures which the British government intended to take, in view of the expulsion of its representative by the Mauritian colonists, the Comité Colonial decided to send an agent to London to put the colony's case once more to the Secretary of State. It convened a general assembly on 23<sup>rd</sup> February 1833, in Port-Louis, at which it was decided to appoint Adrien d'Epina as the colony's spokesman. To support the claim that he was the islanders' accredited representative, the latter took with him " (des) pouvoirs écrits de la grande majorité des habitants". (44)

The common threat was strengthening the alliance between white and libres slave-holders. At least two of a 14 member committee, elected by the general assembly to speak on its behalf, were libres. (45) The 'pouvoirs' bore nearly 1 500 signatures, as against 839, in the case of the 1829 petitions. While more white women may have signed the 'pouvoirs', it is conceivable that there was also a larger number of libres signatories. (46)

D'Epina intended to raise the issues of slave emancipation without compensation and of political rights with the Secretary of State.

But on his arrival in London on the 29<sup>th</sup> May, 1834, he found that slave emancipation was being debated in the House of Commons. Accordingly he decided to focus on the question of political rights, but his repeated requests for audiences with the Secretary of State were turned down. D'Epinay was thus unable to press for the granting of representative government to Mauritius. He sailed back home at the end of September, having achieved nothing for the colonists. (47)

Mauritian writers have characterised these years as years of crisis. Thus, in Port-Louis, Deux Siècles d'Histoire, Auguste Toussaint has subtitled chapter VI,5 "Les Incidents Jérémistes. L'Epoque Terrible". (48) It might be expected that the failure of d'Epinay's second mission, and the restrictive measures implemented by Nicolay would have signalled the end of the plantocracy's control of the political superstructure, and would have paved the way for a genuine reform of the system of slavery. This however was not the case.

Local officials were still either unable or unwilling to enforce slave legislation. After his return to the colony in April 1833, Jeremie was unable to reform colonial society. He deeply resented his humiliating expulsion in July 1832 and was determined to make the colonists' pay for their actions. However he went too far. His persistent attempts to have three judges of the Supreme Court removed, because of suspected collusion with five colonists accused of high treason, brought him into conflict with governor Nicolay, and led to his recall to England in October, 1834. (49)

Striking evidence of the difficulties encountered by a zealous official in enforcing unpopular laws is provided in the reports of R.M. Thomas, the Slave Protector. In his report, for the half-year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1833, Thomas noted that "within the last six months the claims of slaves to liberty on the grounds of illegal importation have increased considerably", and estimated that about 5 000 persons were still being illegally detained as slaves. But at the end of 1833, Thomas admitted that he had only collected sufficient evidence for the confiscation and liberation of 200 such individuals.

The first major difficulty in obtaining such evidence was the attitude of the slave-owners. Thomas wrote : "It may be expected that every measure however unjustifiable, will be resorted to, to prevent discovery.

In the second place, the chief evidence available was that of slave witnesses, who had been imported in the same ship as the slave claiming his freedom. This kind of evidence was inadmissible in court as the witnesses were indirectly interested in the outcome of the suit.

In many cases, witnesses were tampered with, threatened, or bribed by the slave-owners "to give false testimony".

Thomas tried to use the Register of Slaves as evidence of illegal importations. However his investigations were impeded by bureaucratic delays at the Slave Registration Office. The investigations nevertheless convinced him that "abominable frauds" had been perpetrated against the slave laws in Mauritius and that "in almost every instance . . . . The claimants were never registered as slaves" before the registration ordinance of October 1826. (50)

As mentioned on page 254 above, the colonists were under the impression that the Ordinance of 1826 had given them title to their slaves. Thomas wrote that this was the result of an erroneous interpretation of the law, which had tied titles of ownership to all subsequent slave transactions. In other cases, illegally imported slaves were falsely registered as creole slaves.

Thomas wrote that the 'Report of the Commissioners of Inquiry upon the Slave Trade of Mauritius' could throw little light on the claims of individual slaves for freedom, as the evidence it contained was too general. Although a prominent slave trader, Le tord, alias Dorval, had testified before the Commission, he had been reluctant "to declare the names of persons for whom he imported the negroes whom he landed in the colony; or to whom he disposed of them."

Thomas believed that if Dorval could be persuaded to give such evidence, his own estimate that there were 5 000 illegally enslaved persons in the colony, would probably have to be revised upwards.

The Report stated that the slave ships Aglæ, Héloïse, l'Espérance, Industry, Warrior and Courier des Seychelles alone, had introduced over 2 000 slaves into the island, and the Protector suspected that a number of these slaves were still alive. (51)

In Great Britain, from about 1830, the government's commitment to amelioration and gradual emancipation, which dated back to 1823, was

replaced by a drive for the immediate abolition of slavery. This shift in policy reflected changes in public opinion and in the balance of political power in Britain. Anti-slavery feeling strengthened, as it became apparent that amelioration measures were being inadequately enforced in the colonies, and the British public was made more aware of the abuses of colonial slavery by a well-orchestrated propaganda campaign mounted by the newly formed Agency Committee of the Anti-Slavery Society.

West Indian interests in Parliament came under increasing attack in the 1820's from abolitionists and opponents of the sugar-monopoly. The admission of Irish Catholics to Parliament tipped the balance of power against the West Indian faction, while the Reform Act of 1832 reinforced this development by broadening the basis of political representation. Finally, a slave revolt in Jamaica, in 1831-1832, convinced abolitionists and statesmen alike that colonial stability could only be achieved at the price of immediate emancipation.

There is little doubt that abolitionists sincerely espoused the doctrines of humanitarianism, and that religious revivalism and a new moral consciousness lay behind the anti-slavery movement. Abolitionists were not, as Eric Williams has implied, merely 'economic men'. Nevertheless it should be noted that emancipation came at a time when the Caribbean colonies, plagued by soil exhaustion and excessively burdened by debt, were no longer essential to Great Britain's economic well-being. Since the abolition of the slave trade, slavery was no longer seen as a necessary pillar of the colonial economy. Instead it was widely argued that it was a wasteful and expensive arrangement and that colonial progress required the substitution of free for coerced labour. As the weight of industrialists in Parliament increased, and that of West Indian planters and merchants declined, this became the official standpoint. (52)

The inevitability of slave emancipation was confirmed in May 1833 when the Colonial Secretary, E. G. Stanley, was instructed to prepare a draft bill on that subject by the Whig government. The draft measure became law on 28<sup>th</sup> August, 1833 when it received assent. (53)

"The Act for the Abolition of Slavery throughout the British Colonies : for Promoting the Industry of the Manumitted Slaves : and for Compensating the Persons hitherto entitled to the Services of such Slaves -

3 & 4 Wm IV, c. 73<sup>11</sup> was the product of a compromise between abolitionist sentiment and property interests. The slaves were guaranteed liberty, and an attempt was made to integrate them into free society by the provisions of the apprenticeship system. Slave-holders received a £20 m indemnity, and secured the services of their slaves for a period of 4 to 6 years after emancipation as further compensation. (54) The apprenticeship system thus attempted to guarantee economic and social stability in the slave-colonies by interposing a transitional period between emancipation and actual freedom. It also meant that the slaves themselves were to pay the bulk of the compensation awarded to the slave-holders. (55)

Slavery ended in Mauritius on the 1<sup>st</sup> February 1835. As will be seen below, Mauritian slave-owners were compensated for the loss of their slaves, despite the renewed attempts of the Protector of Slaves to have some of the persons, thought to be illegally held in slavery or apprenticeship, liberated.

In accordance with instructions received in May 1834, Nicolay appointed eight prominent colonists to sit, with the Procureur-general (then John Jeremie) and himself, on a local Commission of Compensation. The commission's chief task was to fix the average value of Mauritian slaves for the period 1822 to 1831 and to establish the exact number of slaves in the island at the time. The colonists serving on the commission were Pierre Lucas, Gaillardon, Guillebeau, Blyth, Hunter, Perrot, Jolivet and Davies. The last two were lawyers whose expertise was required by the commission. The first six were all strongly allied to the sugar industry. Lucas and Gaillardon have been mentioned elsewhere. Perrot, an 'avoué', who as such in all probability acted as an agent for sugar estates, had been a prominent member of the Comité Colonial. Blyth and Hunter were merchants with business associates in England, who had established concerns in Mauritius, which by mid-1836 ranked second and third respectively in the colony as sugar-exporters. (56)

The Commission sent a preliminary estimate of slave numbers and average slave prices to England, on the strength of which Mauritian slave-owners were awarded £2 112 632 in compensation for 7 386 claims, involving 66 343 slaves - or an equivalent of £31,8 per slave. The island's share of the total compensation fund of £20 m for the British Empire as a whole was calculated from the estimate of average slave prices and from a summary of returns submitted to the Registrar of Slaves in 1832. However

the returns were not complete, and it was known that at least 1 939 slaves had not been properly registered, apparently because their owners were reluctant to pay the 10 s registration fee. The central Commission of Compensation decided that, while the total compensation awarded would not be affected by the incompleteness in the returns, the civil status of the former slaves would be affected thereby, since articles 1 and 12 of the Act for the Abolition of Slavery stipulated that only duly registered slaves could be apprenticed, while others had to be unconditionally set free. (57)

The local Commission of Compensation was by the very nature of its composition likely to support the colonists' claim. On the 4<sup>th</sup> July 1834, the Cernéen reported that the commission had initiated a correspondence with the colonial agent, John Irving and David Barclay in England : " pour qu'ils appuyassent et défendissent devant la Commission Centrale, les droits des colons à une juste répartition des fonds de l'indemnité. "(58)

Sixteen days earlier Ordinance No. 8 was promulgated to solve the problem of incorrectly registered slaves. The slave-owners involved were given 21 days to comply with the law.

It was pointed out on page 258 above that Mauritian fears of wholesale emancipation without compensation, were set to rest by the Colonial Secretary's instructions of 14<sup>th</sup> June 1831. But the instructions offered some judicial recourse to unlawfully enslaved persons, by setting a special court to deal with their complaints, in the place of the Court of First Instance. (60) At the end of 1833, R.M. Thomas reported that he had collected evidence for the hearing of 200 such cases. A year later, he was investigating 550 claims for freedom "upon the grounds of illegal importation and fraudulent registration". Thomas complained that the number of claims might be increased nearly four-fold "but from the vexatious impediments which were encountered at every stage of the investigations. "(61)

The Protector's efforts in this field were also hindered by a reversal of Glenelg's instructions of 1831. At the end of 1833, Thomas discovered that up to 70 Malays, who had been illegally imported into Mauritius, were being illegally detained in slavery. He took immediate steps to have them freed and secured the release of six of the Malays from the Vice-Admiralty court. At this point proceedings were instituted in the same court in the case of King vs Gaillardon "for the freedom from coercive

servitude of the apprentice Soliman". The defendant, Gaillardon, claimed that article 46 of the Act abolishing slavery had removed the jurisdiction of the Vice-Admiralty Court in such cases. This plea was accepted by the judge and the case was consequently dismissed. (62)

Thomas, on the advice of Williams, the government's advocate, and with Nicolay's approval, signified his intention to appeal to the Privy Council against the judgment, which in Nicolay's words, involved " the rights of every apprentice who may have been illegally held in slavery. " Thomas' investigations and the Gaillardon case had dragged on until the end of June 1835, when Nicolay had given leave to appeal. Nicolay wrote to the Colonial Office on the subject on 4<sup>th</sup> August, 1835. Lord Glenelg replied on 11<sup>th</sup> January 1836, or over five months later. He refused Thomas leave to appeal and upheld the decision in the Gaillardon case. He added that the verdict had in no way impaired the claims of the Malays to freedom, which could be vindicated in the Court of First Instance, but not according to the law, in the Vice-Admiralty court. Thus while Gaillardon's obstructionism, the slow process of Mauritian law, and communication delays had removed all avenues of redress from the reach of unlawfully enslaved apprentices for the best part of two years; the reversal of the Ripon ruling by an Act of Parliament, placed these apprentices subsequently at the mercy of a tribunal, notoriously partial to property interests. (63)

Thomas received no assistance from the local Commission of Compensation in his endeavoursto have illicitly imported apprentices, freed. After Jeremie was suspended from his post in September 1834, he was replaced by Prosper d'Epinau. Thomas lodged an objection to this appointment on the grounds that "Mr. d'Epinau being a holder of slaves and an agent for some slave proprietors", was disqualified from holding the appointment in terms of the Order-in-Council of 13<sup>th</sup> April, 1831. Nicolay overruled this objection, on the advice of the Council and the Chief Judge, and on the grounds that no other qualified person in the colony was not similarly interested in slave property. (64) To allay Thomas' apprehensions that "from his connexions in the colony he (d'Epinau) could hardly be without bias in cases concerning slave property", Nicolay separated the offices of Procureur and advocate general in two; the one was given to d'Epinau, the other to Mr. Williams, who was put in charge of the Protector of Slaves' Department. Nicolay however was inconsistent in appointing d'Epinau in the place of Jeremie on the Commission of Compensation.

The functions of Procureur and advocate-general were reintegrated soon afterwards. In December 1834, a despatch from Lord Aberdeen, the Secretary of State, recorded the objection raised by the Protector of Slaves against d'Epina's appointment, but stated that this objection "will have been set at rest by the abolition of slavery". (65)

After Jeremie's departure, only two of the ten commissioners seem to have been concerned with the issue Thomas was grappling with. James Blyth and the barrister, Davies, were said to have strongly disagreed with the other members on the subject of slaves "illegally introduced and illegally held in bondage"! But this disagreement was never so severe as to cause Blyth to approach the home government on this question; or to prevent him from using his London connexions for collecting claims held by Mauritian slave-owners which, he boasted in 1837, had permitted his firm to make £25 000 out of the Slave Indemnity Department. (66)

Mauritian slave-holders had been threatened with large-scale property losses at the end of the 1820's when allegations of illicit slave-trading led to calls for setting free Mauritian slaves without compensation to their owners. The political over-reaction of the slave-holders to these suggestions, the anxiety of the home government for avoiding political unrest and social instability and a concern for upholding property rights, all served to moderate official policy in this respect. This explains why, while means of redress were made available to illegally enslaved persons, wholesale emancipation was actively discouraged; and why the imperfections of the slave register were largely overlooked in the apportionment and payment of compensation claims. The composition of the local Commission of Compensation was bound to favour the slave-holders in any settlement, for only the men on the spot could establish the legitimacy of claims satisfactorily. In the end, as Pridham put it, "the planters succeeded in obtaining compensation on claims found too complex for disentanglement." (67)

Not all Mauritian slave-owners benefited equally from the award of slave compensation. Small proprietors, lacking the funds or the know-how, to validate their claims, were forced to rely on local attorneys or London merchants, who opened 'bureaux d'indemnités' in Port Louis. By contrast those intermediaries, and most large planters received substantial sums either, as commission, or, in compensation for the loss of their slaves. (68)

In view of the charges of illicit slave importation levied at the colony, and the threat of emancipation without compensation, it must be admitted that on the whole Mauritian planters weathered the emancipation storm quite well.

## 2. The Labour 'Crisis' and its Solution 1834-1842.

Emancipation caused a labour 'crisis' in Mauritius. In a letter to Lord John Russell, the delegate of a committee of colonial merchants and planters, C. Anderson, stated that a large number of liberated slaves had obtained their release from the sugar-estates by purchase during the term of their apprenticeship. When the apprenticeship ended, in March 1839, there were 30 000 former slaves labouring on sugar estates, of whom 17 000 were males and 13 000 females. Anderson wrote that : "out of the 30 000 thus released from all restraint not a single female would return to field work; and it was only from a confused and imperfect idea of their new condition, the difficulty of finding a hut to retire to, or the influence of the stipendiary magistrates of the districts, that between 4 000 and 5 000 of the men were induced to engage as field labourers for a year, which terminated in April, 1840, without the most remote chance of any of the engagements being renewed." (69)

Anderson stated that although tradesmen would probably remain in steady employment after 1839, "field labour is in my opinion ended for ever amongst the emancipated negroes of Mauritius." (70)

Anderson's expectations were confirmed since an employment survey appended to the census of 1847 showed that there were only 486 ex-apprentices working in sugar-estates, on the 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1846, of which a mere 189 were labourers working in fields or factories. The 30 000 apprentices at work on sugar estates in 1839 had been replaced by 34 401 Indian labourers. (71) (For an abstract of the employment survey, cf. Appendix)

How can the almost complete disappearance of ex-apprentices from field work, in the short space of less than a decade, between the ending

of apprenticeship and the occupational census of August 1846, be accounted for?

Most contemporary observers explained this phenomenon in terms of the former slaves' unwillingness to remain field labourers after their emancipation, and of their ability to subsist, without recourse to wage employment on the plantations. Subsequent writers have generally accepted these 'supply-centred' explanations of the labour 'crisis' which followed emancipation. It will be argued, that insufficient attention has been paid to the demand side of the equation. While supply conditions did play a part in the transformation of the Mauritian occupational structure in the 1830's and 1840's, demand factors, such as the attitudes of sugar-planters, and the imperatives of sugar production, also played a significant rôle. (72)

In this section, factors influencing the number of ex-apprentices willing to work in sugar estates, from the supply side, will first be considered. Thereafter, the rôle of factors operating on the demand side will be examined.

In the 1790's Mauritian slave-owners protested against the intended abolition of slavery by the metropolitan government on the grounds that slaves were naturally indolent and that they would use liberty as a passport to idleness. (73) Nearly half a century later the same argument was being propounded against emancipation. The Comité Colonial's indictment of the Trinidad Order-in-Council of 10<sup>th</sup> March, 1824 said of the enfranchised that : "tous ne voient dans la liberté que la cessation du travail." (74) In 1834, a sugar-planter, Eugène Bernard, published a pamphlet of more than two hundred pages, which drew a picture of the slave character. Crammed with anecdotes of plantation life, Bernard's Essai sur les Nouveaux Affranchis de l'île Maurice gave numerous examples of indolence, dishonesty and ingratitude of the Mauritian "noir". (75) The 'Bengal Civilian' drew heavily from Bernard's pamphlet to draw up a sketch of the apprentices of the island. The Civilian apprehended that the end of apprenticeship would rob the planters of their labour. He asked : "Is it reasonable to expect that, indolent as they are, childishly reckless of the future, and intoxicated with misty notions of their new-found independence, they (the apprentices) will . . . . tranquilly and regularly resume as free-labourers, the employments they had exercised in a state of bondage?"

He then predicted "that by far the greater proportion of the 'apprentis' on attaining emancipation, will immediately withdraw their labour from the market, and live unproductive 'faincares', till the whole of their earned or pilfered funds are consumed. Such an event occurring during the sugar season, would be fatal to the planter."(76)

Eugène Bernard and the 'Bengal Civilian' viewed the defects of the apprentices' character in overtly racist terms. The Civilian for instance said "that the Vices observable in the blacks of Mauritius ... are common to the African in his indogenous barbarism, and not deducible from colonial slavery." (77)

Other writers, on the other hand, blamed slavery itself for the reluctance of the enfranchised to engage voluntarily in field labour. Reverend Patrick Beaton, who resided in Mauritius from 1851 to 1856, said of the ex-apprentices:

"The remembrance of the horrors of slavery is engraven upon their memories with a pen of iron, and no lapse of time will ever erase it. Labour in the fields will ever be regarded by them as a mark of degradation, on account of the painful associations and memories which it awakens."(78)

The Quaker missionary, James Backhouse, in a letter to Thomas Fowell Buxton, written towards the end of his three month stay in Mauritius in May 1838, said that if the labour supply declined after the ending of apprenticeship this would not be due to the blacks' 'disposition to idleness', but rather because they were taught "by the oppressive system under which they have so long groaned, to look upon the privileges of liberty as connected with power to abstain from working at pleasure."(79)

In an appendix to Backhouse's letter, Edward Baker, a member of the London Missionary Society, believed that not so much slavery, as the manner of its termination, that is, the apprenticeship system, was at the root of the slave's refusal to labour for his former master. Had the slave been freed at once "mere habit, as well as necessity, would have powerfully tended to keep him in his former sphere of action."

The apprenticeship system had been ostensibly designed to inure the slave to habits of voluntary labour, but, "the exactly opposite effect has been produced

The apprenticeship labour is compulsory, even his own time is sold by agreement to his master and the

fulfilment of the agreement is compulsory. The law requests and teaches him to regard compulsion as essential to labour. Hence a discredit is cast upon voluntary labour". (80)

The shift from plantation labour would not have taken place if the ex-apprentices had not been able to secure alternative means of livelihood. Contemporary observers were aware of this fact, but some of their writings imply that ex-apprentices had limited wants, and that their unwillingness to labour could be gratified, in an environment, where such wants were easily met. The implication of this view was that an increase in wages would not raise the supply of labour.

Thus Major Archer wrote : "It has been asserted that, the emancipated blacks would willingly work were they offered fair and adequate wages. This is a popular and very mischievous fallacy ... But, in truth, the negro is ignorant in the true sense, of the real value of money; for his wants are too few to need much of it, and whether he gave double or quadruple the value of an article, which gratified his inclinations, would not be the matter of a moment's consideration. As relates to his actual position, he is wholly forgetful of the past, save in his repugnance to labour; he is careless of the future, provided the means of enjoying the present are within his reach, nor will the exertion necessary to obtain them be more than absolutely required in one of the most favoured climes, and upon one of the most productive soils under the heavens." (81)

Similarly, James Backhouse, though well-disposed towards the apprentices, wrote that the wants of blacks were so low and so easily satisfied that

"although it is generally stated among the enemies of emancipation that there will be great distress among the blacks when they become free ... there is in reality no ground for anticipating distress among them, except in the case of the infirm persons." (82)

Bare survival may not have been a problem in early 19<sup>th</sup> century Mauritius, but the notion that the ex-apprentices had limited wants, or, were ignorant 'of the real value of money', is not tenable. During the period of apprenticeship, compulsory labour was limited to 45 hours per week. Any additional labour, beyond this, had to be rewarded in cash. The result was a spreading use of money amongst former slaves, and a widening of the market for consumer goods. For instance, James Blyth wrote to England, in November 1835, that more French wines were required in the colony since "negroes being now too genteel to drink grog have cool claret instead." Two years later, he commented, that "artisans who formerly had eight to ten dollars a month now earn 25 to 30 dollars; and slave labourers now get one or two dollars instead of nothing". (83) Major Archer doubled that ex-slaves possessed "the common attributes of civilised man". However Edward Baker stressed that apprentices shared "the desire natural to every man of bettering his condition." (84)

The ex-apprentices deserted the plantations, not because they had limited wants or lacked money-consciousness, but because they could satisfy their wants better elsewhere. Given the planters' cheap labour policy, to be discussed below, and the availability of alternative means of livelihood, it is no wonder that the liberated slaves chose to opt out of plantation labour.

W.A. Green has shown that in the Caribbean, wherever population density was low and arable land in plentiful supply, freed men were able to leave the estates to engage in peasant agriculture, either as independent landowners, or as squatters on vacant land. On the other hand, where population density was high and arable land mostly in the control of sugar planters, there was no alternative to wage labour and the supply of field workers was relatively plentiful. Green ranked a number of West Indian sugar colonies in terms of the ratio of their slave population to land area at the time of emancipation. This information, to which the data for Mauritius has been added, is shown in Table 6, 2. below. (85)

It can be seen that Mauritius lies closer to the group of low density colonies, than to that of medium-density colonies. Green points out that it would be more precise to relate slave population to arable land, but that this would not substantially alter the relative position of the various colonies. If this is done however, it would strengthen the case for classifying

TABLE 6.2. Ratio of Land Area to Slaves in British Sugar Colonies in 1834.

<u>Colony</u>	<u>Slave Population</u>	<u>Land Area in square kilometres</u>	<u>Ratio of Land Area to Slaves</u>
<u>High Density Colonies:</u>			
Barbados	83 150	430	193
Antigua	29 121	280	104
St. Kitts	19 780	163	121
<u>Medium Density Colonies:</u>			
Grenada	23 638	345	69
St. Vincent	22 226	363	61
<u>Low Density Colonies:</u>			
Jamaica	311 070	10 896	29
Trinidad	20 657	4 543	5
St. Lucia	13 291	604	22
<u>Mauritius: (1832)</u>	63 056	1 852	34

Mauritius as a low-density colony for, as pointed out in the Introduction, only some 14 % of the island is uncultivable. As T. Ramdin puts it : "In Mauritius, the proportion of level or gently sloping land is relatively high, and except for mountain slopes and steep valley sides, relief does not impose serious restrictions upon agriculture."(86) When Darwin was in Mauritius in 1836 he was told that not more than half the island was yet cultivated. (87) There was abundant vacant land, especially on the central plateaux, where a number of free villages were to spring up after emancipation. A visitor to the interior canton of Vacoas in the late 1850's or early 1860's, observed that : "the country, some years ago, was covered with forest trees; now a great deal of it is cleared especially on the slopes of the Trou aux Cerfs\*, and here the emancipated slaves

\* The crater of an extinct volcano near Curepipe, at present the second commercial centre of Mauritius.

and their descendants have purchased small plots of ground, built their "cazes" (or cabins) in them, and cleared the ground to cultivate rice, potatoes, and even sugar-canes, on the sale of which articles they make their living."(88)

A number of ex-apprentices were able to save enough to purchase freehold plots, as indicated in the census of 1846, which lists 2 388 of the former as independent proprietors. Many others must have rented land from established landlords. Edward Baker remarked that, already in 1838, land was being divided into small tenements to be let out to the enfranchised. Landowners were motivated by rising land values, which had increased "in some places from fifty dollars to three hundred dollars per acre"; but if the experience of the Caribbean is anything to go by, the subdivision of land may also have been a premium against labour scarcity. Extra hands were always required, especially at harvest time, and if the planters could induce their former apprentices to settle in their neighbourhood, they might be able to draw on the latter's labour, even if only on a casual basis; during the season. (89)

While the former slaves deserted the sugar-cane fields, there are indications that they did not lose contact with the sugar industry altogether. In the times of slavery, black women had been employed to weave sugar bags from the leaves of the 'Vacoa' palm. After emancipation, the making of sugar bags became a lucrative secondary occupation in many areas. In the district of Flacq, in the late 1850's, George Clark observed that south of the straggling village of 'Camp de Masque', : "some hundreds of the peasantry in the neighbourhood are employed in the manufactures of sugar bags, from the leaves of the Vacoa, (Pandanus utilis). These offer a never failing source of employment, and at the worst times enable those who make them to procure a good supply of the necessaries of life. In many of the country shops far more payments are received in bags than in money, and children may be seen going to purchase the provisions for the family use and carrying a few bags in payment. The shopkeeper prefers this to being

paid in money, as he gets a profit on the bags as well as on the goods for which he obtains them : and many persons have laid the foundations of their fortune in this trade. "(90)

Sugar-bag making was just one of the plantation skills which former slaves put to good use after emancipation. Other occupations of this kind, in which women featured prominently, were dressmaking, laundering and mat-making. Former male slaves, who saved sufficiently to purchase a cart and a draught-team, became carters. These were especially numerous in Port Louis, where there were some three hundred 'carrioles', or pony-drawn carriages used to transport passengers, in the late 1850's. Some of the ex-apprentices became shopkeepers and general dealers, or tavern and inn-keepers. Others settled in the free villages, straggling settlements, that sprang up near coastal harbours or besides busy highways in the 1840's and 1850's. (91) Many eked a living from the sea as boatmen, sailors and fishermen. The census of employment of 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1846 lists only 796 ex-apprentices in the 'naval' category, but clearly the sea provided a living for many more, if only as a source of supplementary foodstuffs or casual income. James Backhouse saw the poor people of the coast using thick bundles of the 'prostrate stems of Batatas Maritimas' as makeshift cast-nests with which they collected many small fishes. Backhouse wrote that some libres, who appeared to be in an improving condition, owned large nets and took their fish to the Port-Louis market "carrying them in the night to avoid the heat, strung on poles, resting on the shoulders of two men." On his ramble round Mauritius, George Clark listed numerous fishing villages. One of these was at "La Grande Baie" where : "many fishermen reside on its shores, and are very skilful in the management of their narrow boats, the sailing and weatherly qualities of which excite the admiration of all who are able to appreciate them. By far the greatest part of the fish taken here, and indeed on most parts of the coast, is sent to Port Louis." (92) Indirect evidence of the opportunities which the sea held out to the ex-apprentices is that "subsequently to the emancipation of the slaves, an attempt was made to pass a law, to prevent persons fishing on the coast, without they possessed certain qualifications, and in other respects to throw impediments in the way of the improvement of the lower orders of the people, but it was rejected by the home government." (93)

Thus it appears that former field slaves, who wished to find an alternative to plantation life, were able to do so with relative ease. Many could subsist on small holdings, with or without the supplementary income of casual labour. Small savings permitted the establishment of largely independent livelihoods, such as those of the ubiquitous carter or hawker.

The foregoing partly explains why the supply of plantation labour shrank after emancipation. But this was also linked to the special features of slave demography. The decline in the volume of slave importations, which followed the abolition of the slave trade and the ending of illicit slave trading in the early 1820's, altered the population structure, as was depicted in Chapter 5, 3. The 'ageing and wasting effect' was no longer offset by fresh importations, and as the transition to a naturally increasing slave population was necessarily slow, there was a temporary phase during which the population declined absolutely. This was apparent as early as 1838, when Edward Baker noted :

"As an acquaintance in our neighbourhood observed a short time since, it was amazing to hear how the blacks were daily dying off.

I was not amazed, for I reflected that the suppression of the slave trade took place more than twenty years before the Act of Emancipation, so that all the slaves imported legally, and at an adult age must now be verging on fifty years. And I had observed a vast majority of slaves on the estates apparently of that age."(94)

James Backhouse believed that the demographic situation in Mauritius was such that the island was incapable "of raising an adequate working population to turn the resources of the colony into account".(95) From just over 63 000 in 1832 the slave or ex-slave population declined to 49 365. But of the latter, only 38 049 had been alive at the time of emancipation, the remainder being children under 12 years of age, who were born since. The compiler of the census report of 1847 noted : "In the class of ex-apprentices almost the whole excess of males above females consists of men of 40 years of age and upwards, viz. 6193 out of 6 918. Of the total male population of this class, those above 40 amount to 43,4 % ... If, therefore an apparently

excessive mortality should occur within a few years among the old male ex-apprentices, due consideration must be paid to the above circumstances in drawing any inference from the fact."(96)

The absolute decrease in the number of ex-apprentices in the years after the abolition of slavery led several contemporary observers to adopt the pessimistic conclusion that Mauritius could never raise a sufficient working population from within its own territory. Even James Backhouse, who feared that Indian immigration could degenerate "into another species of slavery", believed that the islanders would always be dependent on foreign labourers if they were to turn the resources of the colony into account.(97) Most contemporaries failed to appreciate that the excess of deaths over births in the group of ex-apprentices was a merely transitory phenomenon. By 1846 the phase of absolute population decrease, that had begun in 1826, was at an end. By that time, as can be seen in Table 6, 3 below, sexual balance had been attained in the under-40 age groups.(98)

TABLE 6, 3.      Composition of ex-Apprentice Population of Mauritius  
According to Age and Sex, as at 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1846.

<u>Age-Group</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Males : Females</u>
0 - 14	6 359	6 579	1,0 : 1,03
15 - 39	9 314	8 526	1,0 : 0,92
40 - 59	9 774	4 912	2,0 : 1,0
60 and over	2 433	1 101	2,2 : 1,0
Total	27 880	21 118	1,3 : 1,0

The rising proportion of pre-nubile females and females of child-bearing age in the ex-apprentice population, gave the latter a potential for natural increase which it had formerly lacked. High death-rates among the older ex-apprentices by 1846 had little effect on the supply of labour since by then most of the one-time slaves were either outside or on the margin of the labour force. Edward Baker had seen middle-ages slaves on the estates "and many of them grievously infirm, bent like a bow, and absolutely incapacitated by the constant use of the hoe, from standing erect as men."(99)

The demographic factor, the slow transition from a labour force nourished by annual slave importations, to one fed from within its own ranks by natural increase, would probably have limited the potential growth of the sugar industry for some years. However the planters were unwilling to gear the expansion of sugar cultivation to the rate of population growth.

The inflow of compensation funds into Mauritius was reflected in an increase in the number of sugar mills from 167 in 1833 to 203 in 1838. By this latter date 130 mills were steam-powered as opposed to 69 in 1833. As a couple of years was required before a newly established plantation could be brought into production, sugar output figures did not rise so spectacularly. The increase in sugar production, as measured by exports, from 33 742 metric tons in 1833 to 36 001 metric tons in 1838, was nevertheless impressive. (100)

In view of impending final emancipation, the planters had to find ways to induce the ex-apprentices to remain in plantation agriculture, to meet the labour requirements of the expanding sugar industry. Alternatively, extraneous sources of labour had to be tapped.

The great majority of sugar planters refused to consider the possibility of retaining their labourers by offering them attractive wages. They justified this course of action by arguing that slaves had limited wants and did not understand the value of money. But, as pointed out above, this was not the case. On the contrary apprentices seem to have been acutely aware of the value of their labour. Edward Baker wrote that slave-owners, presumably with little or no land, capitalised on the tight labour market, during the apprenticeship period, by hiring out their apprentices at lucrative rates to the sugar planters. The slave-owners were paid 6-8 dollars a month for the hire of each labourer, but the latter's actual remuneration was two dollars a month, which was equivalent to little more than the cost of their subsistence. Baker commented :

"Now this state of things is clearly owing to the apprenticeship system, the surplus going to the owner, and not to the labourer. The blacks, however, naturally expect to get still higher wages on becoming free and hence arises the only real danger of their refusal to labour at all. (101)

During the period of apprenticeship, hours of work were limited by statute to forty-five a week, or to nine hours daily for five days, in the case of praedial labour. As stated above, apprentices had to be paid for any additional labour they agreed to undertake. But they were very inadequately compensated for this, as the owners reduced the sums paid for 'overwork' by taking deductions for time-off, or by setting up grog shops on the estates, for the sale of cane spirits to the apprentices at inflated prices. James Backhouse told Buxton "that when he (the apprentice) was a slave he had no money to spend, and was therefore limited to two glasses of arrack in the day, but now, in many instances, his master sells him additional arrack for a portion of his hard-earned wages." (102)

Baker was convinced that the planters would refuse to pay labourers the value of their hire after apprenticeship had ended. He wrote: "The planters, however, are determined not to pay such wages, even whilst they exact them, and have fixed upon two dollars a month, with food, as the maximum. They bind up heavy burden for others, but will not bear one quarter of the same themselves." (103)

In order to secure an abundant supply of labour at low wage-rates, the planters initially tried to hinder the formation of an independent black peasantry and to draft laws, regulating relations between masters and servants, which were heavily tipped in the former's favour.

James Stephen, the permanent Under Secretary of the Colonial Office, wrote in the mid 1840's that Mauritian labour laws had an unstable character, in that they tended to be vague and lenient for the masters, but definite and severe for the servants. Referring to a Mauritian Masters and Servants Ordinance, Stephen stated: "Slavery is a name no longer to be pronounced as one of the Institutions tolerated in the Queen's Dominions. But the desire to extinguish the freedom of those on whose labour the profits of capital depend, is a passion always at work, and almost always working by subtleties, and petty encroachments like those with which this law seems to me to abound." (104)

Ordinances 16 and 17 of 1835, introduced by the non-official members of the Legislative Council, and which secured the assent of the

governor and procureur-general, were anything but subtle. The ordinances, the first of which was applicable to field labourers, and the second, to servants and workmen, were adopted, according to the preamble to ordinance 16, because existing laws did not adequately force "the lower classes of society to labour". (105)

The Dutch author W. Kloosterboer, who has made a comparative study of various forms of compulsory labour existing in a wide range of countries since the abolition of slavery, has written of the Mauritian Ordinances of 1835 that : "a farther going system of labour compulsion is hardly imaginable". (106) The laws laid down that any freed person, capable of labour, and without employment or sufficient means of subsistence, could be sentenced to up to three years forced labour on a plantation. Under this system the Police Department was cast into the role of labour recruiters for the sugar-industry. Competition between employers for labour was restricted by the imposition of penalties on persons guilty of enticing labourers away from their employment, and labour mobility was severely limited by the setting up of a register of labourers, and by the institution of a pass-system. (107)

In a despatch to Nicolay, dated 25<sup>th</sup> May 1836, Lord Glenelg wrote that the ordinances had been disallowed, on the grounds that they greatly impeded "the free demand for employment, and the free supply of labour", and because their effect would be "to establish a compulsory system scarcely less rigid, and in some material respects even less equitable than that of slavery itself." (108) Had these ordinances been sanctioned, it is likely that the clauses dealing with persons without employment or sufficient means of subsistence would have been used to compel peasant squatters to labour. As mentioned previously, a measure to hinder freed men from earning a living from the sea was also enacted at about this time, but was similarly disallowed.

If the Colonial Office was unwilling to sanction legislation, as blatantly against the interests of the enfranchised as the Mauritian ordinances of 1835, it was not unconcerned with the problem of securing a labour supply in the sugar-colonies. At the end of 1838, only a few months before apprenticeship ended in Mauritius, Glenelg sent a circular despatch to the governors of Guiana, Trinidad, St. Lucia and Mauritius, enclosing six model codes designed to create a new legislative framework, aimed at

integrating the freed men into colonial society. Three of these codes dealt specifically with the problem of labour. These were the Masters and Servants and the Vagrancy Orders-in-Council, of 7<sup>th</sup> September, and, the Order-in-Council for preventing the unauthorised occupation of land of 6<sup>th</sup> October 1838. (109)

The Masters and Servants Order provided a useful device against irregular employment, in the form of one year contracts of service. But in practice, this law had little effect as few apprentices could be persuaded to accept yearly engagements. This was due firstly to the low level of wages, offered by the planters, relative to the alternative means of livelihood available to freed men. Secondly, the latter must have looked at all forms of bond-employment, especially at contract-labour in the cane-fields, as akin to slavery. (110) The Vagrancy law promulgated in 1838 was less severe than the provisions of the disallowed ordinances of 1835 had been, but its definition of vagrancy was vague enough to allow its use against freed men who were unwilling to enter into wage-employment. In the last stages of apprenticeship, the jails were packed with apprentices convicted of desertion. After 1838, however, Indian absentees and deserters formed the bulk of those arraigned for vagabondage, while the former apprentices "passed out of official cognisance." (111)

The Order-in-Council for the prevention of squatting applied the ideas of Edward Gibbon Wakefield to the sugar-colonies. In a Letter from Sydney, published in 1829, Wakefield argued that New South Wales could be settled by financing immigration through the sales of Crown lands. His antidote to the dispersion of settlement was the setting of a 'sufficient price' on the land which put it beyond the immediate reach of the impecunious immigrant. The latter would be forced to labour for some years to accumulate sufficient savings to purchase a landholding. The 1838 Order set the upset price of Crown land at £1 per acre. The Order could not be enforced effectively : it proved just as powerless to prevent squatting in the Crown colonies, as the application of the Wakefieldian Scheme to New South Wales was unable to prevent swagmen from peopling the outback. As Craton points out : "where much undeveloped land existed, nothing could prevent its development by free peasants, whether they paid for it or not." (112)

Where unused privately-owned land was available, an effective application of the prohibition against squatting on Crown lands, would have

had little impact on the colonial labour supply. As stated previously, many ex-apprentices were able to save sufficient cash to purchase land sold by planters to capitalise on rising land value or in the hope of securing a seasonal labour supply. Others could rent land from the same planters. As a last resort, the liberated apprentices could settle in 'free' villages that were mushrooming all over the island in defiance of prohibitions against squatting.

Mauritian planters did not persist in their attempts at coercing ex-apprentices into employment because they were able to get regular supplies of cheap labour from abroad. Within a few years of the ending of the illicit slave trade in the early 1820's, Mauritians were attempting to recruit 'free' labourers in Asia. In 1829 the firm of Guillardin & Co. began recruiting labourers from Madras and Singapore, with the approval of the Government of Mauritius. On 21 September of that year the Albion arrived in Port-Louis with over 500 labourers on board. Very few of these early immigrants stayed on the estates for long : many were dissatisfied about their working conditions, some complained that they had not been paid for three months. As desertion and vagrancy increased, the local government ordered the repatriation of 329 of these Indian and Chinese workers at their masters' expense. There was a trickle of immigrants in 1831 and 1832 when a Mr. Bickajee is known to have introduced at least 29 labourers from Bombay. But the real beginning of Indian indentured emigration to Mauritius dates from 1834 when J.E. Arbuthnot, an enterprising planter with mercantile connections in India, engaged 75 men, from the Bombay area and the Hill districts of Western Bengal, to labour for five years on indenture on his Le Piton estate. (113)

From 1834 to 1842, 26 028 Indian indentured workers landed in Mauritius, the bulk of this influx arriving before 1839, in which year the Governor-General of India placed it under a temporary ban. The progress of Indian immigration into Mauritius, until the lifting of the temporary prohibition in 1842, is sketched in Table 6,4. below. ( cf. note 114)

This substantial immigration was in all likelihood funded with compensation money or with loans raised on compensation claims. A committee of the Legislative Council reported in 1845 that : "between 1834 and 1839 25 468 individuals were introduced at the sole expense

of the planters and merchants, and at a cost amounting to not less than £10 each, or an aggregate of £254 680, to which must be added a further sum of £20 000 to £30 000 for the return passages or those whom the planters were engaged to send back. "(115)

Yet much of this expense was recouped from the labourers themselves. It was common practice to deduct one fifth of the latter's monthly salary to refund the passage money and an advance of six months' wages paid to them in India, as well as for security against misconduct. There is little evidence that the planters heeded the Colonial Office's objections to this practice. Moreover wages could be reduced below the agreed levels and the immigrants be made to defray the expense of importation in other ways. For instance, two days of labour were required in compensation for every day of absenteeism from work for whatever cause. Shops were set up on the estates, where arrack and other commodities were sold to the labourers at inflated prices. In Mauritius contract labour soon degenerated into a system of debt slavery. (116) These practices were still current in the late 1850's, when Rev. Patrick Beaton reported that :

"though temperate at their arrival, they (the Indians) soon learn to have recourse to arrack as a stimulant, which is freely supplied to them at the grog-shops established in the neighbourhood of most of the plantations. The planters usually have shops attached to the estates, similar to those established by the masters in the mining districts in England, where their labourers are supplied with the different articles which they require. "(117)

Economic distress in India, misrepresentation and deceitful recruiting practices allowed Mauritian planters to obtain Indian labourers at wage-rates far below those that would have prevailed in the insular labour market in the absence of apprenticeship or of Indian immigration. (118) Indeed the main advantage of Indian labour, apart from the regularity of its supply, from the point of view of the sugar-grower, was its cheapness. This was the leitmotiv of Indian immigration, a theme constantly recurring in the

account of travellers and in the representations of the planters themselves.

At the very start of the immigration, at the end of 1835, the Bengal Civilian established that : "two thousand of the Dangga caste ... have been already transplanted into the island, and the demand for them still increases. Their subsistence costs a third less than that of the 'African', and if not quite so athletic as the "Caffres", they are infinitely more willing and docile." (119)

In May 1838, James Backhouse wrote to T.F. Buxton that 12 000 Indians had already been imported and that there were plans to raise this number to 30 000. "By this arrangement, he added, the planters hope to keep down the rate of wages, the Indians being engaged for five years at five rupees (10 s.) a month, .... the Indians generally represent themselves as having been deceived with regard to the nature of the work required of them, and their dissatisfaction is increased by finding apprentices let out by their masters to the same labour in which they are themselves engages, at about 5 dollars (or 20s.) a month." (120)

The planters denied that their aim was to people the country "with a superabundance of labourers", but, after the ban on Indian emigration was revoked by the Government of India, 34 525 indentured workers arrived in Mauritius in the year 1843 alone. From 1842 to 1846 arrivals amounted to 54 468 or to nearly  $\frac{1}{3}$  more than the whole ex-apprentice population as enumerated in the census held in that latter year. (121)

This massive influx did not satisfy the sugar-growers. In 1845 a Legislative Council committee was appointed to investigate "the causes of the insufficiency of the labouring population, after so large an introduction of immigrants." The Committee strongly criticised the new system of yearly contracts which made it possible for labourers to negotiate new terms of employment after twelve months' service. It noted that two and a half dollars a month was "the rate universally given to newly-arrived and inexperienced Immigrants on their first Engagement; but it appears that they rarely re-engage at that rate, and that the

usual rate varies from 3 to 4 dollars and sometimes even rises higher. It appears to your Committee that 2½ dollars is an ample remuneration for this class of labourers, and for the amount of labour rendered by them, whether their wants here, or the prevailing rates of wages in India be considered; and it is contrary to the interests of the Colony to maintain a rate above that which will both remunerate and satisfy the labourer. "(122)

The system of yearly engagements was "contrary to the interests of the colony" the Committee argued, because it increased the expenses of sugar cultivation and made it impossible for the proprietors to expand sugar production to the point where the capital they had invested in their estates would be recovered. Moreover it was responsible for : "the present unsound state of the Labor Market in which the master is obliged to 'coax labor', and to submit to the will and caprice of his laborers. "(123)

The Committee looked for a solution to these problems, firstly, in the substitution of three to five year-contracts for the present yearly engagements, and secondly, in a further introduction of indentured labourers into the colony so as to keep "the Labor-Market supplied according to the demand". It concluded that : "the colony has more to apprehend from the want of Laborers than from an excess; and that in this country, where with a favourable soil and climate, The means of livelihood are so easily acquired, and where the cost of a Return Passage to India may be earned in three months, there is nothing to fear on account of the Laborers from a temporary excess of labor - even if such an event were probable. "(124)

How can we explain the planters' reluctance to pay going wage-rates to the ex-apprentices ? How can the 'cheap labour policy' which is at the centre of Mauritian economic history be accounted for ?

Part of the explanation can be found in the planter's past. From

the 1790's planters had resisted all attempts at reducing the authority they had over their slaves. All their writings are underlined by a determination not to lose an ounce of economic or social privilege, and they justified this attitude by appeals to racialistic beliefs and to the sanctity of property rights. G.R. Mellor had written that emancipation called for a psychological re-orientation on the part of the slave-holders in order to allow the transition from the coercing to the cajoling of labour. The Mauritian plantocracy refused to adapt to this new situation. (125)

Necessity, in the form of an absence of cheap labour from abroad, may well have forced this psychological redirection on the planters. W.A. Green has shown that the labour shortage that followed emancipation, notably in British Guiana and Jamaica, was followed by a high-wage, high-productivity pattern of sugar-cultivation. Agricultural implements which had been ignored in the time of slavery were adopted on a large scale, agricultural societies were formed and planters generally "exhibited unprecedented initiative in altering traditional methods of cultivation". Dramatic technical changes were apparent as early as 1845 in many areas. Green also states that progressive techniques in Jamaica could only be introduced "on well-situated level estates". Elsewhere sugar-planting was abandoned in favour of agricultural activities more suited to prevailing agro-economic conditions. (126) In a study of the political economy of British Guiana after emancipation, A.H. Adamson states that the fifteen years after 1838 were "a period of transition and adaptation", during which one finds "the beginning of a thorough going rationalisation of production technology." (127) The experience of Martinique and Guadeloupe, after 1848, and of other Caribbean islands, shows that rationalisation of the sugar industry and some measure of agricultural diversifications was always a possible answer to the problems of rising wages and declining profits. (128)

In the case of Mauritius, the labour 'crisis' which followed emancipation, did not cause a shift towards labour-saving technology within the sugar-industry, which continued to dominate above the economic landscape. (129) During the days of slavery, despite some upward pressure on labour-costs as a result of the abolition of the slave trade, planters had remained wedded to traditional labour-using techniques to minimise labour redundancy during the off-crop. As pointed out in Chapter 4 forced idleness during the slack season was seen as economically wasteful as the slaves had to be fed

whether they worked or not, and it was felt to be incompatible with the needs of plantation discipline. (130)

The abolition of slavery created a situation of labour scarcity. However this labour shortage was largely of the planters' own making, as labour was only scarce relative to the low wages, pegged at the level of subsistence, which they were willing to offer. The payment of wages high enough to attract peasant labour would have necessitated a rationalisation of sugar production techniques. At the same time the expansion of sugar-cultivation had to be geared to the pace of population growth.

As argued above, there was no room for the 'coaxing' of labour in planter psychology. There were also practical considerations which made adaptation to a high-wage, high-productivity pattern of sugar production difficult. Capital had been invested in sugar-mills and estate enlargements on the basis of traditional technology during the period of apprenticeship, when the labour force was still 'captive'. Additional funds for investment may therefore have been scarce, while the planters wanted to expand sugar-cultivation to the point where returns were high enough to make the prior investments worthwhile. (131)

Even if d'Epinay's estimates of the profitability of sugar-making are not accepted at face value, the heavy weight of planter indebtedness and of labour costs in total production costs militated against the making of high profits even in good years. Planter indebtedness probably increased during the 1831-1834 depression, and the planters must have been unwilling to reduce profits further by raising wages and investing in new technology. Circumstances prevailing in the market for British colonial sugar, where there was a continual downward pressure of sugar prices, were also not of a nature to favour experimentation.

Because of the above considerations, planters tended to prefer traditional techniques wherever a supply of cheap labour could be secured. (132) In Mauritius this need was met by indentured immigration from India. The island's location in the Indian Ocean, only 4 600 kilometres from Bombay, allowed Mauritian planters to obtain indentured labour at a lower cost than planters in the Caribbean, 'half-way around the world' from the Indian sub-continent. (133)

While the metropolitan government had abolished the slave

trade and the institution of slavery, it did not oppose the importation of Indian indentured labourers into the sugar-colonies during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is true that from time to time Indian immigration was subject to temporary prohibitions, and that attempts were made to prevent the traffic from degenerating into a new slave trade. However, it cannot be denied that Indian indentured labour was in many respects a 'new species of slavery'. It replaced the 'captive' labour force which the planters had lost as a result of emancipation. It was cheap and permitted the expansion of production on the basis of traditional technology. Although subject to natural decrease, owing to the shortage of women in the immigrant population, it could easily be maintained or increased by regular annual importations. The indentured labourer was moreover subject to a plethora of coercive laws which had the effect of negating the voluntary basis of his engagement. (134)

In 1842 the temporary ban placed on Indian emigration to Mauritius was revoked. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> January of that year, the Secretary of State wrote to governor Sir Lionel Smith about "the motives which have induced the confidential adviser of the Crown to adopt this conclusion." (135)

Stanley stated that the decision was in the interests of the colony as much as in that of the labourers themselves. In the first case, "Without the aid to be drawn from a foreign supply of labour, much of the fixed capital at present existing in the sugar colonies, and especially in Mauritius, will become comparatively useless. In addition to the very serious loss attendant on such an extinction of property, would be the still greater evil that the colony must retrograde in wealth and civilisation beyond the power of recovery within any assignable period."

In the second case he pointed out that poverty and distress were chronic in India and that : "Among the few resources open to the sufferers for escaping these calamities, one is emigration to Mauritius, where a constant and large demand for their labour exists."

Stanley then commented on the rôle of the enfranchised in the colonial economy.

He said that Indian emigration to Mauritius had been criticised for a number of motives, amongst which "justice to the newly emancipated class has been alleged. It is maintained that we have no moral right to introduce rivals into the market for their labour, especially when such rivals are brought there at the expense of the public revenue; a fund to which it is said the enfranchised negroes contributed so largely, though they have neither voice nor influence in the expenditure of it."

Stanley rejected this view. In a statement which reveals that he shared the planters' view on the subject he said : "when the slaves in our colonies were emancipated, they became subject to all the duties and to all the liabilities of the free members of a free state. Industry in their callings was one of those duties, and the penalties consequent on indolence and self indulgence were among those liabilities..... if a large portion of the people in any colony .... withdraw from those labours by which the community at large would be enriched and improved, they can have no reasonable ground of complaint if measures be taken by the Legislature to introduce other workmen who will undertake the duties which they decline."(136)

Notes to Chapter 6.

- (1) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions.... - Op. cit. , pp. XII, XIII, 132. Toussaint's book is a very useful collection of documents on this period 1830-1834, but the introduction, although detailed and evidencing a wide knowledge of sources, shows no great analytical depth.

Despatch from Earl of Ripon to Sir C. Colville dated, Downing Street, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1831 Parl. Papers (144) 28<sup>th</sup> March 1836, pp. 3 -4.

- (2) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions... Op. cit. , pp. XIII, 2 -4 , 131. The general assembly was convened on the 26<sup>th</sup> November 1829 in the establishment Antelme & Mars under the presidency of the Danish-born trader, J. J. Wiehe. A d'Epinau, the assembly's secretary, linked the accusations of the anti-slavery faction and the commissioners' report on the illicit slave trade to the fiscal privileges which the planters were afraid of losing. He remarked that the report could result in : "Des opinions désavantageuses, des mesures défavorables pour nous .... Il est toujours important pour la colonie de se justifier aux yeux de la métropole. Mais, dans les circonstances actuelles, cette nécessité devient encore plus pressante. En effet à la rentrée du Parlement, qui aura lieu vers les fêtes de Pâques, la Chambre des Communes s'occupera d'une réduction proposée sur les sucres des possessions britanniques. L'Association des Aborigènes d'un côté, les colon des Antilles de l'autre, également avides de nous nuire, s'armeront sans aucun doute, de toutes les accusations publiées contre l'Île Maurice.... lesquels pourraient produire au Parlement un effet désavantageux pour la Colonie."

Ibid pp. 3-4.

- (3) Jeremie, J. - Op. cit. , p. 9.

Despatch of Earl Ripon to Sir C. Colville dated, Downing Street, 14<sup>th</sup> January, 1831. Parl. Papers (144) 28<sup>th</sup> March 1836, p. 3.

Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir George Murray, dated Mauritius 7<sup>th</sup> October, 1830. Parl. Papers (230) 10<sup>th</sup> March 1831, p. 121.

Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions... - Op. cit. , p. XIV

- (4) Colville's despatches of 19<sup>th</sup> September, 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> October are mentioned in Despatch of Earl Ripon to Sir C. Colville, dated Downing Street, 14<sup>th</sup> January 1831 Parl. Papers (144) 28<sup>th</sup> March 1836, p. 3.
- (5) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions, . . . - Op. cit. , p. XIV  
Jeremie, J. - Op. cit. , pp. 9, 11.
- (6) Jeremie, J. - Op. cit. , pp. 11, 13.  
Société de l'Histoire de l'Île Maurice - Dictionnaire de Biographie Mauricienne No. 8, March 1943, pp. 237-238.
- (7) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions . . . - Op. cit. , p. XIV.  
'Extraits du Registre des Délibérations et Arrêtés du Comité Colonial de l'Île Maurice, séance du 30 Septembre 1830' - in Ibid. pp. 5-6.
- (8) 'Instructions du Comité Colonial à M. A. d'Épinay, député de Maurice en Europe, dated 6<sup>th</sup> October 1830' in Ibid, pp. 6-10.
- (9) A petition of 1826 to this effect had been rejected by the home government on the grounds that "the (Cape) Colony was extensive, poor, badly supplied with means of communication and peopled by a sparse, racially divided and, for the most part politically divided European population outnumbered by slaves and coloured folk, to say nothing of the Bantu upon the borders." Walker, E.A. -Op. cit. p. 165.
- (10) 'Instructions du Comité Colonial à M. A. d'Épinay, député de Maurice en Europe,' dated 6<sup>th</sup> October 1830 in Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions, . . . - Op. cit. , pp. 8-14.
- (11) Ibid.
- (12) Ibid. The argument, that the colonists could not comply with the law because of their limited education, was used to explain the absence of title deeds to slaves, of certificates of registration and the failure to keep punishment record books. On the other hand, claims were made for political representation on the grounds that "la majorité des habitants est studieuse et loin d'ignorer toutes choses; quand il leur a fallu dresser des mémoires et des rapports sur différents sujets, ils ont toujours été à la hauteur de leur besogne et l'ont exécutée avec autant d'habileté (si ce n'est plus) que n'importe quelle fonctionnaire civil qu'on ait jamais envoyé à Maurice." (Ibid. p. 210) Much of the colonists' opposition to anti-slavery reforms was

characterised by such contradictory claims.

- (13) Ibid, pp. 8-14. This was a reference to the Order-in-Council of 2<sup>nd</sup> February 1830 which provided for the admission of the evidence of slave witnesses.
- (14) Ibid. This argument is not entirely implausible. The House of Commons Parliamentary Committee inquiring into the slave revolt of 1831-1832 in Jamaica concluded that "the peace of Jamaica could only be preserved by the immediate abolition of slavery" and, in December 1832, the Colonial Office spoke out against partial emancipation by saying that "the constant peril of insurrection rendered full emancipation necessary". As Philip Mason's first condition was being negated by the selective extension of freedom, the stability of the system of domination was threatened. However except for the grossly exaggerated reports of the colonists about increasing crime in Mauritius, there is no real evidence that a slave revolt was brewing in the island in the early 1830's. cf. Green, W.A. - Op. cit. , pp. 112-115.
- (15) 'Instruments du Comité Colonial à M.A. d'Épinay, député de Maurice en Europe', dated 6<sup>th</sup> October 1830 in Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions.... - Op. cit. , pp. 6-10.
- (16) Pitot, A. Ile Maurice.... - Op. cit. , III, pp. 34-35.
- (17) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions... - Op. cit. , p. XV.
- (18) Ibid, pp. 199-200.
- (19) on health care cf. Chapter 2 above; Telfair C. -Op. cit. , pp 43-44.  
on the lack of bedding cf. 'A Picture of Negro Slavery ...'-Op. cit. p. 12.  
on sugar bags, cf. Chapter 6, 3.  
on the lack of absentee proprietors until after the 1831-1834 depression cf. Chapter 4, above; Pitot, A. Ile Maurice - Esquisses Historiques (1823-1828) vol II, R. de Spéville et Cie, Port Louis 1912, p. 179.
- (20) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions - Op. cit. , p. 201.
- (21) Despatch of Lord Ripon to Sir C. Colville, dated Downing Street 14<sup>th</sup> January 1831 Parl. Papers (144) 28<sup>th</sup> March, 1836, p. 4.
- (22) Ibid, pp. 4-5.
- (23) Ibid, p. 5. Blackburn replaced George Smith in 1824 and remained chief-judge until 1835 cf. Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions .... - Op. cit. , p. 141 n. 66.

- (24) cf. Chapter 5, 1.  
Jeremie, J. - Op. cit., p. 13.
- (25) Ibid, pp. 15,17,19,21.  
On stake of government officials in the sugar industry cf. Chapter 4 above and page 264-265, 300 n. 38.
- (26) cf. Chapter 5, 2 above.  
Prior, Sir James cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit., pp. 211-213.  
Hall, G.J. in Ibid pp. 218, 222-223.  
Société de l'Histoire de l'île Maurice Dictionnaire de Biographie Mauricienne - Op. cit., No.20 (May, 1947) p. 615.  
Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit., pp. 33-34.
- (27) Knaplund, P. The British Empire 1815 -1939 Hamish Hamilton, London, 1942, p. 28.  
Mauritius' strategic value to Britain was still great in 1840. When Major Archer wrote to the Secretary of State, Lord John Russell, that Mauritius "is the only point upon the surface of the great Indian Ocean, taking the Cape, New Holland, Ceylon and Java (if we except Madagascar, distant 480 miles) as the limits of the horizon, upon which we could establish a post to afford protection to our communications with India.... It lies in the direct route of ships from India and China; and from its position must be considered the key to our Indian possessions. Art could make it the Malta of the Indian seas...." (cf. Archer, E.C. A Letter to the Right Honourable Lord John Russell, Secretary of State for the Colonies, upon the policy of permitting emigration from the Continent of India to the Mauritius, by Major E. Archer of H.M.'s service. Pelham Richardson, London, 1840, pp. 5-6.)  
After construction of the Suez canal however the island declined in strategic importance. This was reflected in the suggestion of a committee of the House of Commons, in 1871 that Mauritius be exchanged for Pondichéry (cf. Knaplund, P. The British Empire... - Op. cit., p. 252.)  
Hunt, K.S. - Op. cit., pp. 59-60.
- (28) A Late Official Resident, An Account of the Island of Mauritius and its Dependencies, by a late official resident, published by the author, J. Jones Printer, London 1842. p. 29.
- (29) Letter of A. d'Epinau to P. Lucas, dated London, 12<sup>th</sup> February, 1831

- in Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions... - Op.cit., pp. 14,15,18.  
Ibid, pp. 14, 28,31.  
cf. Chapter 4 on British capital investments in the Mauritian sugar industry.
- (30) Despatch of Sir George Murray to Sir C. Colville, dated 5<sup>th</sup> April, 1830 Parl. Papers (676) 16 July, 1830. pp. 199-200.
- (31) Jeremie, J. - Op.cit., p. 25.
- (32) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions... - Op.cit., p. 33.
- (33) Jeremie, J. - Op.cit., pp. 23-25.  
Chronological Account of Events in Mauritius, 1810 to 1834, quoted by Mr. Jeremie in his pamphlet Recent Events in Mauritius, manuscript anonymous, with the note : "The dates are given from memory, but are certainly right in the order of events and within a day or two of the actual time. "
- Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions..... - Op.cit., P. vi, xx;
- (34) 'Assemblée Générale du Mercredi 2 Novembre 1831' Gazette de Maurice, 12 November, 1831 in Ibid pp. 43-46. Other concessions were the abolition of all monopolies and the abrogation of article 29 of a decree of 13 pluviôse An XI, which had sheltered civil servants from prosecutions. Ibid. p. XVII.
- (35) Ibid, pp. 44-45.  
Letter of Adrien d'Epinaÿ to Lord Goderich, dated London, 16<sup>th</sup> July 1831 in Ibid, pp. 39-40.
- (36) Letter of Adrien d'Epinaÿ to Mr. Lucas, President of the Comité Colonial, dated London 16<sup>th</sup> March 1831 in Ibid p. 24. On the 17<sup>th</sup> April, 1831 d'Epinaÿ wrote to Lucas "qu'il n'y a plus la moindre crainte à conserver à ce sujet", in referring to the issue of the illicit slave trade in Ibid p. 31.  
Jeremie, J. - Op.cit., p. 27.
- (37) Toussaint, A. Port Louis..... - Op.cit., p. 285.  
Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions..... - Op.cit., pp. XIV-XV.  
Société de l'Histoire de l'Île Maurice, Dictionnaire de Biographie Mauricienne No. 14, July 1944, p. 426; No. 11, October 1943, p. 333.
- (38) Staveley was popular in Mauritius amongst the colonists but it has not been established whether he had material interests in the colony. Blackburn had been praised by Murray for his integrity, but he was criticised by Jeremie, R.M. Thomas and Lord Goderich. Little was

discovered about Cooper, except that he died in August 1832, to be replaced by Williams.

cf. Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions.... - Op.cit., pp. 95, 141, 142.

- (39) Société de l'Histoire de l'Île Maurice Dictionnaire de Biographie Mauricienne No. 20, May 1947, p. 615.  
Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions.... - Op.cit., p. 141.
- (40) Ibid, p. XXI.  
Jeremie, - Op.cit.p. 41,43,57,59,63.
- (41) Ibid, pp. 67,69,71.
- (42) Ibid, pp. 71,75.  
Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions.... - Op.cit., p. XXI.  
cf. Chapter 5 ,1 above.
- (43) Ibid.
- (44) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions.... - Op.cit., pp. XXII-XXIII.
- (45) Ibid, p. 62. They were Jean Cantin (négociant) and Charles Nayna (propriétaire). Of the Committee's 14 members, seven were planters or proprietors, three were attorneys and four were traders.  
cf. Pitot, A. Ile Maurice..... - Op.cit., II, on surnames of prominent libres.
- (46) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions.... - Op.cit. p. 62.  
cf. Chapter 5, 3 above.
- (47) Toussaint, A. (ed) Les Missions... - Op.cit., pp xxii -xxvii.
- (48) Note that Chapter VI is entitled 'Années Troublées (1823-1840)
- (49) Toussaint, A. Port Louis....- Op.cit., pp. 298,309,310.  
Jeremie challenged Blackburn's presidency of the Court in particular  
cf. Chronological Account of Events in Mauritius ,1810 to 1834  
Op.cit.
- (50) 'Extracts from Slave Protector's Report for half year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1833' and 'Extract from General Observations in Slave Protector's Report for half year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1833', Parl. Papers (144) 28<sup>th</sup> March 1835 pp. 6-7.  
on the inadequacy of slave registration in Mauritius cf. Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., pp.714 et seq. and Hunt, K.S. - Op.cit., pp. 64-69. Slave registration was aimed at detecting illicit slave-trading.
- (51) 'Extract from Slave Protector's Report for half year ended 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1833' and 'Extract from General Observations in Slave Protec-

- tor's Report for half year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1833', Parl. Papers (144) 28<sup>th</sup> March 1836, pp. 6-7.
- (52) Craton, M. - Op.cit. , pp. 275-280  
Green, W.A. - Op.cit. , pp. 111-117.  
Mellor, G.R. - Op.cit. , pp. 97-104.  
Rice, D. - Op.cit. , pp. 222-223.  
Knaplund, P. James Stephen, . . . . - Op.cit. , pp. 98,99
- (53) The government took up the emancipation issue after Buxton had indicated that he would introduce an abolition bill in Parliament himself, if this was not done. cf. Craton, M. pp. 278-279.
- (54) Ibid.  
Mellor, G.R. - Op.cit. , p. 109.
- (55) Ibid. Stanley's plan for emancipation, announced in May 1833, aimed to compensate slave-owners for the loss of their slaves' labour for 12 years. A £15 m loan represented 25% of this value. The remaining 75 % was to be reimbursed by the slaves, who would be apprenticed to their former owners for 12 years, when they would labour for 3/4<sup>s</sup> of normal working hours. In response to West Indian demands, the compensation fund was raised to £20 m, but the apprenticeship period was lowered to six years, for praedial, and to four years, for non-praedial slaves, to meet abolitionist criticisms of the plan. This was rather less than the original compensation proposal but was still an extraordinary burden for the slaves to carry for the sake of property rights.
- (56) Barnwell, P.J. - Op.cit. , pp. 238, 249,250.  
Pitot, A. Ile Maurice : Esquisses Historiques, vol IV, published in Rev. Ret. Maur., vol. V, 5 (Sept. , 1954) pp. 309-310.
- (57) Ibid, p. 313.  
Pridham, C. - Op.cit. , pp. 141,410. Pridham stated that the average value of slaves from 1822 to 1830 was set at £69,7. The compensation awarded was thus only 46 % of the estimated value.
- Despatch from Lord Glenelg to W. Nicolay, dated Downing Street, 5<sup>th</sup> August, 1835, Parl. Papers (144) 28<sup>th</sup> March 1836, pp. 14-15.
- (58) cited in Pitot, A. Ile Maurice . . . . ., vol IV, Rev.Ret. Maur., vol V, 5 (Sept. , 1954) pp. 311-313.
- (59) Ibid. .

- (60) The structure of the Mauritian judiciary retained its original form after the British conquest. The Court of First Instance was a tribunal of first resort for civil cases which fell outside the competence of the district magistratures. The Court of First Instance was a court of last resort in certain cases, but litigation involving large sums was handled by a Court of Appeal. cf. Toussaint, A. L'Administration Française . . . . . - Op. cit., pp. 61-65, 73-75.
- (61) 'Extract from Slave Protector's Report for half year ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1833' and 'Extract from Slave Protector's Report from July 1834 to February 1835', Parl. Papers (144) 28<sup>th</sup> March 1836, pp. 6, 12.
- (62) Ibid., p. 13.  
Despatch from the Sir W. Nicolay to the Earl of Aberdeen, dated Mauritius, 4<sup>th</sup> August 1835, Ibid. pp. 7-9 .
- (63) Ibid.  
Despatch from Lord Glenelg to Sir W. Nicolay, dated Downing Street, 11<sup>th</sup> January 1836, Ibid, p. 10.
- (64) Toussaint, A. Port-Louis . . . . ., - Op. cit., p. 310.  
Despatch from Sir W. Nicolay to Mr. Secretary Stanley, dated, Mauritius, 5<sup>th</sup> June 1834, in Ibid, p. 13.  
Despatch No. 54 from Sir W. Nicolay to E. G. Stanley dated, Mauritius, 11 September 1834 in W. Nicolay (et divers) Dépêches Colonial Office 1829-1846, Manuscript copy, Carnegie Library of Curepipe.
- (65) Despatch No. 62 from Sir W. Nicolay to E. G. Stanley, dated Mauritius, 17<sup>th</sup> September, 1834 continuing with Thomas' objection to D'Epinais's appointment recorded in Despatch No. 54 of 11<sup>th</sup> September in Ibid.  
Despatch No. 43 from Sir W. Nicolay to E. G. Stanley, dated Mauritius, 23<sup>rd</sup> September 1834 in Ibid.  
Despatch from T. Spring Rice to W. Nicolay, dated 1<sup>st</sup> September, 1834 in Ibid.  
Despatch from Lord Aberdeen to Sir W. Nicolay, dated Downing Street, 27<sup>th</sup> December 1834, in Ibid. Aberdeen announced the abolition of office of Protector of Slaves.
- (66) Barnwell, P. J. - Op. cit., pp. 248 et seq. Blyth was opposed to the d'Epinais faction, published a rival newspaper the Mauricien, and founded the rival 'Commercial Bank' but he was as deeply involved in the sugar industry as the members of the Comité

Colonial. There were divisive forces at work within colonial society. To take the influence of language and cultural background, for example, we find George F. Dick frequently taking the side of Sir Lionel Smith against the French-speaking members of the Legislative council in the early 1840's. Yet these centripetal forces were generally more than offset by the centrifugal pull of sugar.

- (67) Note that the payment of compensation was fixed per slave, according to that slave's category. The chief categories were praedials attached to the soil, praedials unattached, and domestic slaves. Since, if claims were not accepted compensation was not paid, it was in the interests of the colony that all claims should be validated, and this accounts for the attitude of the local commission of compensation. cf. Pridham, C. - Op. cit. , p. 343.
- (68) Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit. , pp. 243-245, 250.  
Toussaint, A. Histoire des Iles Mascareignes.... - Op. cit. , pp. 206-207.
- (69) Letter of C. Anderson to Lord John Russell, dated Clifford Street, London, Parl. Papers (331) 28<sup>th</sup> May, 1840. pp. 194-195.
- (70) Ibid, p. 195.
- (71) Appendix No. 9 - 'Statement showing the Employments of the Population of Mauritius, on 1<sup>st</sup> August 1846.', Mauritius, Census of 1847 Parl. Papers (280) 11<sup>th</sup> May 1849, pp. 210-211.
- (72) On contemporary explanations of the labour 'crisis' following emancipation. cf. the accounts of Eugène Bernard, A Bengal Civilian, Major E.C. Archer, examined in Chapter 6, 2. Amongst contemporary writers only Edward Baker, and to a lesser extent James Backhouse, showed an awareness of the influence of factors on the demand side on the supply of labour. Examples of recent writings which accept the orthodox emphasis are C. I. Cumpston - Op. cit. , pp 11-12, 33, 44-45.  
Hazareesingh, K. - Op. cit. , p. 11.  
Kondapi, C. Indians Overseas 1838-1949 Oxford University Press , New Delhi, 1951 p. 2.  
Kloosterboer, W. Involuntary Labour since the Abolition of Slavery, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1960 - pp. 3-4.

- (73) cf. Chapter 3, above.
- (74) 'Observations sur les Clauses 12 et 15 de l'Ordre en Conseil du 10 Mars 1824, dont la publication est proposée à l'île Maurice' dated 7<sup>th</sup> August, 1828 in Despatch of Sir C. Colville to Sir Murray, dated 21<sup>st</sup> February 1829, Parl. Papers (676) 16<sup>th</sup> July 1830, p. 146.
- (75) The title of Bernard's Essai is taken from Toussaint, A. & Adolphe, M. Bibliography of Mauritius 1502-1954, Esclapon Ltd., 1956, p. 60.  
A Bengal Civilian - Op. cit., p. 6.
- (76) Ibid, pp. 6-8, 10-13, 16-18, 20.
- (77) Ibid, p. 20.
- (78) Beaton, Rev. P. - Op. cit., p. 264
- (79) Letter of James Backhouse to Thomas Fowell Buxton, dated Port-Louis, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1838 in Extracts from the Letter of James Backhouse when Engaged in a Religious Visit on the Island of Mauritius, Accompanied by George Washington Walker, Harvey & Darton, London, 1839 p. 71.
- (80) Ibid., p. 76.
- (81) Archer, Major E.C. - Op. cit., p. 22.
- (82) Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse... - Op. cit., p. 71.
- (83) Kloosterboer, W. - Op. cit., p. 3.  
Blyth, J. cited in Barnwell, P.J. - Op. cit., p. 248.
- (84) Archer, Major E.C. - Op. cit., p. 22.  
Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse... - Op. cit., p. 77.
- (85) Green, W.A. - Op. cit., pp. 192-193.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit., p. 773.
- (86) Ramdin, T. - Op. cit., p. 18.
- (87) Darwin, C. - Op. cit., p. 572.
- (88) Ryan, V.W. Mauritius and Madagascar : Journal of an Eight Years Residence in the Diocese of Mauritius, and of a Visit to Madagascar Seeley, Jackson & Halliday, London 1864, pp. 20-21.  
cf. also Clark, G.A. 'A Ramble round Mauritius with some excursions in the Interior of that Island; to which is added a familiar description of its fauna and some subjects of its flora by a country school-Master! The Mauritius Register ; Historical, Official and Commercial, corrected to the 30<sup>th</sup> June 1859, p. XL

- (89) Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse... - Op. cit. , p. 74.  
Green, W.A. - Op. cit. , p. 170.  
cf. Appendix
- (90) Clark, G. - Op. cit. , p. IX.
- (91) cf. Appendix.  
Beaton, Rev. P. - Op. cit. , p. 27.  
A Bengal Civilian - Op. cit. , p. 17 stated that many of the enfranchised were 'unlicensed dealers'. It is likely that many ex-apprentices engaged in petty trade on an informal basis, given the relatively high cost of general dealer's or hawker's licences.  
cf. Clark, G. - Op. cit. , passim on free villages.
- (92) Ibid, p. 111.  
cf. Appendix.  
Backhouse, J. A Narrative of a Visit to the Mauritius and South Africa, Hamilton, Adams & Co. , London 1844, p. 37.
- (93) Ibid, pp. 37-38.
- (94) cf. Chapter 5,3,  
Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse... - Op. cit. , p. 76
- (95) Ibid, p. 78.
- (96) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , p. 773.  
Mauritius - Census of 1847 Parl. Papers (280) 11<sup>th</sup> May 1849, pp. 196-201.
- (97) Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse.... - Op. cit. , pp. 66, 72,78.
- (98) Appendix No. 4. 'Statement showing the Ages of the Population of Mauritius and distinguishing ex-apprentices and Indians, on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1846 ' Mauritius - Census of 1847 Parl. Papers (280) 11<sup>th</sup> May 1849, pp. 204-205.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , pp. 770-777.
- (99) Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse... - Op. cit. , p. 76.
- (100) North-Coombes, G.A. The Evolution of Sugar-Cane Culture... - Op. cit. , p. 165.  
Hugoulin, - Op. ci. t, p. 582.
- (101) Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse... -Op. cit. , pp.68, 74-75.

- (102) Ibid, pp. 68-69.
- (103) Ibid, p. 75
- (104) cited in Knaplund, P. James Stephen . . . . - Op. cit. , pp. 12,23,24.
- (105) Mellor, G.R. - Op. cit. , p. 171.
- (106) Kloosterboer, W. - Op. cit. , p. 7.
- (107) Ibid, pp. 6-7.
- (108) cited in Mellor, G. - Op. cit. , p. 171
- (109) Ibid, pp. 129-133.
- (110) Very few of the ex-apprentices were contract workers, thus in 1844 out of 34 749 engagements concluded before the stipendiary magistrates in Mauritius, only 111 involved créoles, many, but not necessarily all of whom, were ex-apprentices.  
cf. Neave, R. The Labour and Indian Immigration Question at Mauritius, by Robert Neave of the Bengal Civil Service, printed at the Cernéan Office, Port Louis, July 1845, Appendix No. 17.
- (111) Backhouse, J. A Narrative. . . . . - Op. cit. , pp. 19-23,30.  
Mellor, G.R. - Op. cit. , pp. 129,131.  
Kondapi, C. - Op. cit. , p. 14.  
Craton, M. - Op. cit. , p. 298 says that even though the Vagrancy Order-in-Council of 1838 defined vagrants carefully, the definition also included "persons wilfully refusing to support themselves and their families". He points out that, notwithstanding the intention of the home government, "the magistrates commonly indulged in their own definitions of right and wrong."
- (112) Ibid, p. 301-306.  
Mellor, G.R. - Op. cit. , pp. 113,132.  
Shaw, A.G.L. The Economic Development of Australia, Longman, 3rd ed. , 1973, pp. 40-41.
- (113) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , pp. 794-795.  
Lamusse, R. - 'The Economic Development. . . . . ' - Op. cit. , II, La Revue Agricole et Sucrière de l'Île Maurice, vol 43,2 (1964) p. 115.
- (114) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , p. 796.  
Table 6,4, below.

TABLE 6,4, Arrivals of Indian Immigrants in Mauritius  
1834 - 1842.

<u>Year</u>	<u>Males</u>	<u>Females</u>	<u>Total</u>
1834	75	-	75
1835	1 182	72	1 254
1836	3 639	184	3 823
1837	6 939	353	7 292
1838	11 567	241	11 808
1839	933	102	1 035
1840	107	9	116
1841	499	43	542
1842	73	10	83
Total	<u>25 014</u>	<u>1 014</u>	<u>26 028</u>

- (115) Neave, R. - Op.cit. , p. 27.
- (116) Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse... - Op.cit. , p.72.  
Backhouse felt that "from these circumstances, and the general feeling towards labourers of persons who have long been accustomed to employ slaves, it is obvious that unless great care be exercised, the employment of Indian labourers will grow into another species of slavery". cf. Note 117, below.
- (117) Beaton, Rev. P. - Op.cit. , p. 178. Note however that in 1838 the grog-shops were attached to the plantations. Backhouse reported at the time that "many of the Indians are also acquiring a taste for strong drink, which may be expected soon to grow into a strong appetite; and being supplied when beyond a small discretionary allowance, by purchase from their masters, many of them are likely to be deeply in debt to the latter when the five years of their servitude expire."
- (118) cf. Kondapi, C. - Op.cit. , pp. 2-5 and Tinker, H. A New System of Slavery : The Export of Indian Labour Overseas 1830-1920 Oxford University Press, London,1974 ch. 3 on the economic causes of emigrating from India.  
onthe abuses pertaining to recruitment cf. Ibid pp. 65-69.
- (119) A Bengal Civilian - Op.cit. , pp. 20-21.

- (120) Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse, . . . - Op. cit. p. 72  
In 1850 the Home Secretary of the London Missionary Society, J. J. Freeman noted that former slaves were no longer employed on sugar estates : "They demand, it is affirmed, far higher wages than the planters can afford to give, so as to secure remunerating prices . . . . The sugar is now manufactured chiefly by the labours of the immigrant Indians, whose wages are much lower than those demanded by the Creoles. The latter ask five dollars per month, which is equal to 5 s per week; the Coolies from India do not receive more than half that sum. They consequently expend less on food. In fact their nourishment is extremely meagre - in many cases it is quite insufficient for the demands of nature. "  
Freeman, J. J. A Tour in South Africa with Notices of Natal, Mauritius, Madagascar, Ceylon, Egypt and Palestine. John Snow, London, 1851, pp. 372-373.
- (121) Legislative Council, sitting on 21 April, 1845 in Neave, R. - Op. cit. , p. 54.  
Kuczynski, R.R. - Op. cit. , p. 796.  
Appendix 6. Mauritius Census of 1847. Parl. Papers (280) 11<sup>th</sup> May 1849, p. 201.
- (122) in Neave ,R. - Op. cit. , pp. 16,17,24,33.
- (123) ibid. pp. 31-33 Resolutions III,V,XII. The Report stated that Indian labourers were also adversely affected by one-year contracts as a result of "the maintenance of wages, and the increase of rations and allowances to an excessive amount, injurious even to the Indians themselves, and producing discontent at the inequality existing among several bands on the same estate." cf. however Freeman's testimony in note 120 above, on the adequacy of the Indians' diet.
- (124) in Neave, R. - Op. cit. , pp. 31-33. Resolutions III, VI,VIII. Three year contracts of service were legalised in terms of Ordinance No. 3 of 1849.
- (125) Mellor, G.R. - Op. cit. , p. 165.
- (126) Green, W.A. 'The Planter class and British West Indian Sugar Production before and after Emancipation' Economic History Review vol. 26, 3. ( 1973)

- (127) Adamson, A.H. Sugar without Slaves : The Political Economy of British Guiana 1838-1904 New Haven, 1972, p. 13.
- (128) Williams, E. From Columbus to Castro... - Op.cit., pp. 335-340.
- (129) On the question of unchanging technology, cf. Sornay, P. de La Canne à Sucre..... - Op.cit., passim. Sornay quotes extensively from contemporary sources. cf. also d'Epinay, C. -Op.cit., passim.
- (130) cf. Chapter 4.
- (131) E. Baker wrote that compensation funds "which might have served to pay the free labour of the blacks, has been expended on their compulsory labour. The old state of things has thus been perpetuated."
- James Backhouse wrote : "the emancipation money is spent in many cases in the improvement of his estate, and in some disencumbering it from mortgage, and he has got into a train of operation suited to the present means of employing without wages his own servants, for whose freedom he has been paid by the government."
- Extract from the Letters of James Backhouse... - Op.cit., pp. 69, 74.
- (132) Green, W.A. 'The Planter Class....' - Op.cit., pp. 462-463. cf. Chapter 4 on the impact of the 1831-1834 depression and Chapter 6, 1 on d'Epinay's estimates of profitability in sugar-planting c. 1830. Note that labour was still the crucial variable in sugar manufacturing and that the problem of the seasonal demand for labour at crop time was not solved by new technology.
- (133) Green, W.A. British Slave Emancipation ... - Op.cit., p. 276
- (134) on the demographic characteristics of the Indian population of Mauritius, cf. Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit., passim. The similarity between indentured labour and slavery has been stressed inter alia by Tinker, H. - Op.cit., Chapter 1; and Kloosterboer, W. - Op.cit., passim.
- (135) Despatch of Lord Stanley to Sir Lionel Smith, dated Downing Street, 22 January 1842, Parl. Papers 26 15<sup>th</sup> February 1842, pp. 31-3.
- (136) Ibid pp. 31-34.

Appendix to Chapter 6

Abstract of 'Statement showing the Employments of the Population of Mauritius,  
on the 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1846.'

Category of Employment	General Population.			Ex-Apprentices			Indians		
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
Commerce, Trade and Manufactures	5 937	2 379	8 316	5 923	2 486	8 409	999	13	1 012
Agriculture									
(a) Sugar Estates	942	-	942	465	21	486	34 352	657	35 009
(b) Other	1 073	-	1 073	4 340	-	4 340	3 087	-	3 087
Labourers	561	92	653	3 491	1 350	4 841	2 631	17	2 648
Military	1 801	-	1 801	-	-	-	-	-	-
Naval	841	-	841	796	-	796	234	-	234
Professional	176	5	181	-	6	6	3	-	3
Other Educated Persons	1 353	7	1 360	46	-	46	16	-	16
Government Civil Service	530	-	530	148	-	148	52	-	52
Domestic Servants	1 133	100	1 233	3 085	1 700	4 785	2 335	1 160	3 495
Independent Proprietors	1 407	321	1 728	1 508	880	2 388	5	-	5
Total Enumerated Above	15 754	2 904	18 658	19 800	6 443	26 243	43 714	1 847	45 561

Notes to Appendix

1. There were fifty separate occupations, ranging from auctioneer to wheelwright, listed under the first category.  
Ex-apprentices were particularly numerous in the occupations of dressmaker, milliner and seamstress (2 060), carpenter and joiner (1 795), mason and bricklayer (1 279), carter (708) mat maker (401) boot and shoemaker (248) and hawker (228).
2. Ex-apprentices working on sugar estates included clerks (296), labourers (189) and sirdar (1). Ex-apprentices employed in agriculture, outside sugar estates, included woodcutters (121), gardeners (341) and others (3 878) presumably in casual employment.
3. Ex-apprentices in the category of labourers were employed as labourer and workman (3 033), washerman and woman (1 538), watchman and house guardian (210), stone and tombstone cutter (37), porter and messenger (23).
4. No ex-apprentices were employed in the military.
5. Of the 796 ex-apprentices in the naval category, 607 were fishermen, 135 were seamen on shore and 54 were boatmen.
6. The six ex-apprentices shown as professionals were midwives.
7. Ex-apprentices in the category of 'other educated persons' included clerks (27), engineers and surveyors (16) and musicians (3).
8. In domestic service there were 4 496 ex-apprentices working as servants and 287 as grooms and coachmen.

Reference: Appendix No. 9 - 'Statement showing the Employments of the Population of Mauritius, on 1<sup>st</sup> August, 1846'. Mauritius - Census of 1847 Parl. Papers (280) 11 May 1849 pp. 210-211.

## CONCLUSION

Plantation agriculture, the large-scale cultivation of tropical staples for export, did not develop in île de France until the 1770's. During the previous half century when the island was under the rule of the Compagnie des Indes plantation agriculture made little headway.

Initially the Compagnie wanted to establish coffee cultivation for export in île de France, but even when its stated aim was to encourage plantation agriculture, it adopted policies apparently designed as much to retard as to foster agricultural development. As the only source of imported supplies and as the only outlet for colonial produce, the Compagnie was in a position to manipulate product and factor markets to guide agriculture along desired channels, but it was seldom willing to forego the opportunities of exploiting its captive colonial market.

After 1729, when the Compagnie decided to discourage coffee cultivation, the colonists were repeatedly enjoined to concentrate on the cultivation of provision crops. Given the predatory nature of Compagnie rule and its control of product and factor markets, it was only men with influence, able to circumvent restrictive regulations with impunity, or who had ready access to land, labour and capital, who were able to grow plantation crops with success. A case in point is Mahé de Labourdonnais who used his position to acquire extensive landholdings and large supplies of slave labour. In association with a number of colonists, Labourdonnais started cotton, indigo and sugar plantations.

Until the end of Compagnie rule, plantation agriculture remained the exclusive preserve of a handful of powerful officials and influential settlers. Although it was relatively easy to import Malgaches slaves and Indian merchandise in defiance of regulations, interloping could not provide remaining colonists with outlets for staple production, since, unlike the Caribbean, no nearby markets existed for such produce.

In the last four decades of French rule, île de France developed into a commercial centre, as the rapacious régime of the Compagnie des Indes was replaced by the less restrictive royal administration. The expansion of trade was detrimental to the growing of provision crops as an island

division of labour developed in the Mascarenes, whereby Bourbon, with no safe anchorage, became the 'granary' while île de France, with two natural harbours, provided port facilities. However it is not true, as some writers have argued, that commerce and agriculture were incompatible. The growth of plantation agriculture paralleled the rise of île de France as a commercial centre. Staple production met the need for an exportable commodity in an island where the specie was always in short supply, as a result of chronically adverse external accounts. It also provided opportunities for employing merchant capital profitably. Consequently it can be argued that plantation agriculture flourished because of, rather than in spite of, commercial prosperity.

Under the royal administration, cotton and coffee were the first plantation crops to be grown commercially.

In 1776, after coffee cultivation was severely set back by disease, the search for an alternative staple was given a great impetus, both spices and indigo being grown experimentally by a handful of pioneers.

Dependence on unstable external markets made plantation agriculture a highly speculative activity, and, large-scale cultivation of any unfamiliar plantation crop, depended on a prior demonstration that such cultivation was both technically feasible and financially profitable. Within a few years, the efforts of de Cossigny and of other dedicated and enterprising planters showed that indigo met these twin-requirements and indigo cultivation spread rapidly in the island. It was not until 1786 that enough seedlings became available, from clove and nutmeg plants imported from the Moluccas in the early 1770's, to allow their large-scale distribution to interested planters. However, unlike their counterparts in Bourbon, few colonists in île de France were prepared to venture into the business of raising 'épiceries fines'.

By 1790 a variety of plantation crops, of which indigo was the most important, was being grown in île de France. Cotton cultivation had spread during the previous decade but it fared best in the drier west of the island, where it tended to be concentrated. Coffee had recovered from the ravages of disease but wherever it was grown, it tended to rapidly exhaust soil fertility, as the island's soils were too light and shallow to

allow its continued cultivation. Moreover the crop remained highly vulnerable to cyclones, in spite of the precautions taken by coffee growers to minimise the effect of such storms.

Although sugar-cane was being grown fairly extensively c. 1790, it could not correctly be described as a plantation crop, since it was not grown for export. It could not compete against Antillean sugar in European markets and was kept out of Asia by cheaper Dutch-grown sugar from Java. An increase in sugar-cane cultivation during the 1780's reflected firstly, an increase in local demand for cane-spirits, as a substitute for imported wine, during the American War of Independence. Secondly, the production of cane spirits formed an integral part of the regional slave trade, and it rose as slave imports to the Mascarenes soared upwards, especially in the period 1786-1794.

After 1794, there was a decline in the regional demand for arrack as the slave trade declined in intensity. This was not appreciably offset by a rise in the local demand for cane spirits as a result of war, since the island continued to be supplied with better quality products from abroad by neutral ships. Nevertheless there was an impressive expansion in the acreage under sugar-cane. This was due primarily to the boost given to the local industry by the collapse of Antillean production, following the slave revolts of 1791, and to the consequent dearth of colonial sugar and to the high prices prevailing in continental markets.

News of these market opportunities reached île de France as early as 1792 but, because of the violent smallpox epidemic which paralysed the colonial economy in that year, and since a further lapse of two years from the time of planting and that of harvesting and milling was needed, an upturn in production figures could not have occurred before 1794. Thereafter sugar production climbed upwards, receiving a further boost from the collapse of the island's indigo industry c. 1797. Indigo fields were ruined by insects, while export outlets were lost to competition from the low-cost, high-quality Bengali product. As Alden has shown, Bengali indigo effectively captured the British and continental markets, squeezing out rival producers, and causing a world-wide shrinkage in indigo-cultivation outside Bengal.

In île de France indigo-growers turned to sugar-cultivation,

which was proving more lucrative. This latter activity required far more capital than indigo-growing, but credit was readily available during the 1790's. The island's 'armateurs' fitted out trading vessels for privateering and kept factory wheels turning by foreign plunder. Debt repayment was facilitated by rampant inflation brought about by the over-issue of paper money by the planter-dominated Colonial Assembly.

At the peak of the sugar-boom, in 1803, the acreage under sugar-cane had risen to 5 000-6 300 hectares from 400 hectares in 1789. At the processing stage, planters shifted from the distilling of cane spirits to the manufacture of sugar, the production of sugar rising tenfold from 300 metric tons in 1789 to 3 000 metric tons in 1803, while the output of arrack fell by half from 2,7 million litres to 1,36 million litres during the same period. The number of sugar mills rose from 3 in 1778, to 10 in 1798 and to 60-80 in 1801-1803, by which time some 80 'indigoteries' had been abandoned.

The sugar boom of the 1790's proved of great long-term significance, as it established sugar as île de France's principal plantation crop, but it was short-lived. It came to an end as a result of earlier overspeculation, as inflation was brought under control and the burden of debt was placed squarely on the shoulders of the sugar-planters. The industry also suffered from the blockade, which isolated the colony and cut it off totally from its external markets. (1)

How did slavery become established in île de France ?

Mascarenean slavery did not spring from pre-existing slavery and slave-trading in the south-western Indian Ocean region. On the contrary, the rise of Mascarenean slavery led to an intensification of slave trading in the area, with disastrous effects on political stability and the quality of life at the sources of supply.

Even though the preamble to the Code Noir stated "la chaleur de ces climats, la temperature du notre ne permettent pas aux Francois un travail aussi pénible que le defrichement des terres incultes de ces pays brulans, il falloit y supplier par des hommes accoutumés à l'ardeur du soleil, et à la fatigue la plus extraordinaire. De là l'importation des nègres de l'Afrique dans nos

colonies. De là la nécessité de l'esclavage pour soumettre une multitude d'hommes robustes à une petite quantité de François transplantés dans ces isles, "(2)

the emergence of slavery in the Mascarenes cannot be linked to climatic factors, for the archipelago, isolated from continental masses, had a climate tempered by the influence of altitude and of the prevailing winds.

Sedentary labour at île de France became identified with coercion at an early stage. The Compagnie's policy of making large land grants to a non-working class of landlords, and the abundance of land relative to population, were incompatible with the use of voluntary wage-labour in agriculture. Outside agriculture, military labour proved inadequate, since soldiers preferred to earn their keep by hunting and fishing, and since it proved impractical to coerce them to labour. They were therefore replaced by slaves and indentured servants from India.

The need for coerced labour was met in the Caribbean by white engagés or indentured servants from Europe. White engagés were not used in the colonisation of île de France, because it was presumably cheaper to obtain rural labour from nearby Madagascar than from the métropole. Moreover the system of indentured service was already in decline when the island was settled, and several decades of experience in the Caribbean had demonstrated the superiority of negro slaves, whose supply did not dwindle in proportion to the availability of vacant land.

Plantation crops typically required a large docile labour force, so that the rise of plantation agriculture in Bourbon, after 1715, and in île de France, after 1770, reinforced the prevailing system of labour utilisation.

The transformation of île de France into a 'colonie à esclaves' was the work of Mahé de Labourdonnais who intensified slave trading with Madagascar and pioneered regular slave-trading with Mozambique. Labourdonnais introduced the manioc root from Brazil and the Cape Verde islands. Manioc became the slaves' staple food and its cultivation allowed the island to carry a larger slave population than formerly. During the first six years of Labourdonnais' administration, slave numbers rose fourfold, from 648 in 1735 to 2 612 in 1740, while the ratio of settlers to slaves fell

from 1 to 1,34, to 1 to 1,69 during the same period. The slave population then rose to just over 15 000 in 1767, and to nearly 34 000 two decades later. The ratio of freemen to slaves fluctuating in line with the pace of economic activity, was 1 to 4,0 in 1767, and 1 to 5,1 in 1787. Three years before the British conquest, or in 1807, slave numbers had risen to 65 367, according to official statistics, and the freemen to slaves ratio was 1 to 5,3.

How did the demographic experience of île de France relate to that of contemporaneous slave societies ?

Slaves made up 80-83% of its total population, a ratio remaining practically stationary in the 44 years before 1810. By contrast, slaves made up 40% and 91%, of the cotton, indigo and tobacco colonies of the American south, and of the West Indian sugar colonies, respectively.

In contrast with the American south, but like the Antilles, île de France's slave population failed to increase by natural means and had to be sustained by continuous importation. In 1806, 27% of île de France's slaves had been born in the colony. In Jamaica, in 1788, the corresponding proportion was about one-third, but as many as 80% of North American blacks fell into the same category in the period 1780-1810.

The available evidence does not permit an accurate quantification of the determinants of demographic change in île de France. The annual rate of natural decrease was probably greater than the 3,3<sup>o</sup>/oo estimated by d'Unienville but it was probably below the 55<sup>o</sup>/oo rate given by Bernardin de Saint Pierre. Before 1826 slave birth and death statistics were practically non-existent. In that year, as a result of stricter slave registration laws, returns made by slave-owners came closer to reality. The figures for 1828, 1830 and 1832 show birth rates ranging from 22<sup>o</sup>/oo to 26<sup>o</sup>/oo and death rates varying between 32<sup>o</sup>/oo and 35<sup>o</sup>/oo per annum. This would imply a rate of natural decrease of between 9 and 10<sup>o</sup>/oo per annum. This rate may have been higher in previous decades. (3)

How can one explain the excessive mortality and low fertility that kept slave ranks in perpetual deficit? Low fertility was due principally to the sexual disproportion in slave ranks. In Mauritius, males outnumbered females by 2,3 to 1 in 1817. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, when slave trading was officially encouraged, the disproportion must have been even greater, since the bulk of slave imports was made up of adult males. Because of this, the sexual imbalance was found to be much greater amongst African-born slaves than among creole slaves. (4)

Sexual imbalance encouraged promiscuity, and this in turn facilitated the spread of venereal diseases, which reduced fertility. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre argued that, because of the unbearableness of slavery, slave women were unwilling to bear children. However it was perhaps not so much the yoke of slavery itself, as the lack of a stable family life, which made the practices of contraception and abortion so prevalent.

Slave mortality was lower in the American south than in île de France, not because New World slave-owners were less neglectful of their slaves than their Mauritian counterparts, but because American slaves faced a less hostile climatic and epidemiological environment. They also tended to eat better than Mascarenean slaves. In île de France slave mortality was influenced by natural factors such as dearth, hurricanes and epidemics. The effects of these factors were magnified by the general indifference or neglect showed by the slave-owners towards their slaves.

The Mauritian slave diet, based almost exclusively on manioc and other starchy foods, was often quantitatively inadequate, and always nutritionally insufficient. Dietary deficiencies gave rise directly to nutritional diseases, militated against pregnancies reaching a successful conclusion and raised the risks of infant mortality. Indirectly, by lowering organic resistance, they facilitated the spread of epidemic diseases such as smallpox, cholera and dysentery.

The total absence or inadequacy of health care compounded the effects of poor diets in raising slave mortality to high levels during epidemics. Poor standards of clothing and shelter had the same effect. The view, that high slave mortality was due in part to the neglect of slave-owners for their slaves, is confirmed by the numerous observations that epidemics took a proportionately heavier toll of the latter than of the former. Moreover whites were said to have a higher life expectancy than black slaves.

In the last decade of French rule the slave population consisted of East Africans (44%), Creoles (28%), Malgaches (18%) and Indians (10%). Slave occupations were dependent to a large extent on ethnic origin. Indian slaves, who were reputedly clean and docile, were invariably employed as house slaves and artisans. The 'Malgaches', who were said to be more intelligent than the 'Caffres', were domestics and workmen. The 'Caffres', who were typified as lazy and stupid, were usually confined to rude field

labour. Creoles occupied the top of the occupational pyramid. They predominated in country districts, where they were employed as house slaves, tradesmen and supervisors.

While to a large extent the slaves' position in the occupational hierarchy may have been determined by racial characteristics, place of birth was a far greater obstacle to occupational mobility. Indeed upward occupational mobility depended chiefly on creolisation, on successful integration into plantation society. This is why locally-born slaves were not prevented by their race from attaining high positions and status. Creole slaves were products of the plantation. Born in slavery, never having known liberty, there were the most tractable, and in the eyes of the planters, the most trustworthy of all slaves. (5)

After 1810 the movement towards sugar monoculture, which had begun in the 1790's, was resumed, and the transformation of Mauritius into a sugar colony was completed. Sugar production, as measured by exports, rose impressively. By 1816 the previous peak of 3 000 metric tons, reached in 1803, was bettered. Production rose to 7 485 metric tons in 1820 and to 38 483 metric tons in 1832. On the eve of slave emancipation, Mauritius was only second to Jamaica and British Guiana as a sugar producer. Seven years later it had become the British Empire's premier sugar colony.

This remarkable achievement was due to a number of factors. The island's fertile volcanic soils and its climate, with warm, wet, summers and dry winters, were on balance favourable to sugar-growing.

Given this propitious agro-climatic environment, three variables were found to be of crucial importance. They were the availability of land, the supply of capital, and the supply of labour. In the early 19<sup>th</sup> century only 1/5th of the island's surface, of which over 80% is arable, was being cultivated. There was thus ample virgin land to provide for the expansion of the industry, a fact which must have moulded the expectations of sugar planters. The acreage under sugar rose from 4 934 hectares in 1817 to 28 101 hectares in 1840. This expansion took place at the expense of other crops in the older areas of settlement, as there was a shift from mixed farming to agriculture, the proportion of the total cultivated area under sugar rising from 15% to 87% in the same period. After 1840 however, the growth of the sugar-industry entailed the absorption of previously

uncultivated land. This was made possible by the laying down of a road network between 1817 and 1832, by the British administration, with the aid of military and Indian convict labour.

The capital and labour requirements of sugar-cultivation are much greater than those of other plantation crops. The capital needs of sugar planting increased as sugar-milling became wedded to steam. Cattle-driven mills were housed in simple circular or octagonal buildings with thatched roofs and seldom warranted the cultivation of more than 35 hectares of cane land. Steam-powered mills, on the other hand, were invariably located in solid stone or brick and mortar buildings. By increasing crushing capacity and raising overheads, steam-powered mills necessitated an expansion in the area under sugar to over 200 hectares in some cases, the arithmetic mean for 21 such estates being 97,8 hectares. Thus steam technology called for substantial investments in plant, machinery, buildings and land. By extending the sugar acreage, it raised the need for manpower. It also required special technical knowhow and repair facilities.

As steam technology raised both sugar-estates' outlays and operating costs, the sugar industry was unable to rely on irregular sources of finance, as in its cradle days, when the acquisition of land depended largely on political ties and when mill rollers were kept turning by foreign plunder. To some extent, more reliable sources of capital became available to the island's planters after the equilisation of duties on Mauritian and West Indian sugar in 1825, as British merchants were attracted to the island, and as private banks, pooling British and local capital, were set up in 1832 and 1838.

Planters initially benefited from the ready availability of credit. They paid a price for this in the form of high interest rates and a growing burden of indebtedness which, as early as 1830, was said to amount to one-quarter of the value of their assets. During the depressed 1831-1834, 1840-1843 and 1847-1848 periods, the debt burden increased as planters ran into financial difficulties. In many cases creditors foreclosed, and the structure of ownership in the sugar industry was transformed as individually or family-owned estates were replaced by professionally-run plantations belonging to absentee landlords. This meant an increase in the degree of vertical integration in the industry, as absentee-owners normally performed marketing functions. This strengthening of ties between British merchant capital and the Mauritian sugar industry tended to moderate

metropolitan policy towards the colony. As will be suggested below, it also held negative implications for the island's economic development prospects.

In spite of the British ban on slave-trading, which was extended to Mauritius in 1813, slaves continued to be introduced into the island until the early 1820's, offsetting the tendency of the slave population to natural decrease and keeping down slave labour costs.

The expansion of sugar-cultivation, which subsequently took place, gave rise to a problem of labour scarcity as evidenced by rising slave prices after 1824. Mauritian planters could exert little influence on sugar prices in external markets, and were forced to absorb increasing labour costs. Sugar was the greatest of all slave crops simply because the size of the slave labour force on the sugar plantation was determined by the seasonal character of sugar production. Moreover slavery decreed that slaves should not remain idle during the off-crop, and they were employed in a variety of occupations ranging from the wasteful transporting of the slave-owners' family to the capital in 'palanquins', to the economically necessary, but labour-using, task of planting new cane in individually-dug holes. Since monoculture reduced the opportunities for renting out slaves, or for using them in other activities, it reinforced the dominance of hand-hoe technology.

There was thus little room for introducing labour-saving techniques to economise on the scarce factor. Telfair's claims, in 1830, that "nine-lengths of human labour have been replaced by eighty steam-engines and sugar-mills, by implements of agriculture of all kinds, and by beasts of burden," were shown to have been grossly exaggerated. It was pointed out, for instance, that while steam-engines may have effected some saving in man-power at the crushing stage of production, where mills were not previously driven by water, this must have been more than offset by the need for labour created by this innovation. Not only did steam-engines call for skilled maintenance staff, and for hands to collect fuel for their boilers, but by inducing a considerable expansion in the cane acreage, they also raised the demand for praedial labour significantly.

There was however some slack in the labour force that could be taken up by substituting cattle for slaves in transportation, although this was not done to the extent claimed by Telfair. Moreover, although no

evidence of this was unearthed, it may well be that slaves were transferred from house service to field work. Slave-owners also reacted to the problem of labour scarcity by resorting to carrot-and-stick methods. In some cases slaves were motivated to greater effort by the system of task-work, in other instances, they were compelled to work longer hours.

The supply of labour was a variable of crucial importance for the profitability of sugar-planting. As sugar prices prevailing in external markets tumbled downwards, slave prices in the colony moved relentlessly upwards, from 150 piastres in 1824, to 500 piastres in 1829, and to 800 piastres in 1833. In the absence of a technical revolution, there is little doubt that rising labour costs would have brought the industry to a standstill. The plantocracy's reaction to this dilemma lies at the core of Mauritian economic history. (6)

The attitudes of Mauritian planters to labour problems were moulded during the 1790's, when the system of slavery came under unprecedented attack from abroad. Before that decade, the rare calls made for replacing slavery with a more efficient system of free cultivation had gone totally unheeded. Slavery and slave-trading were then seen as "un des éléments du contrat social" and could be justified by appeal to natural law.

During the decade following the French revolution of 1789, a planter-dominated assembly took control of internal administration in Île de France. It consolidated its power by forming an alliance with property-owning libres, by replacing the republican garrison with a loyal national guard, by censoring incoming mail, exiling persons with revolutionary sympathies to France and, as was tentatively suggested, also by means of selective enfranchisement, which was used as a 'safety valve' for slave discontent.

The metropolitan government initially left the colonial status quo undisturbed, but in 1794, in a belated application of revolutionary principles, and in recognition of developments in Saint-Domingue where slavery had ended in fact as well as in name; it decreed the abolition of slavery without compensation, and with immediate effect, in all French colonies. Two years later, it sent commissioners Baco and Burnel to enforce this decree in the Mascarenes, with the backing of republican troops.

The commissioners did not intend to free the slaves immediately,

but only after a transitional period of a year. They were aware that the situation in the Mascarenes was quite different from that in the Antilles, where a large-scale exodus of planters, planter-cooperation with the enemy, and widespread anarchy had forced the improvisation of novel modes of cultivation, ranging from independent peasant farming to large-scale communal agriculture.

They argued, on climatic grounds, that only men born in the tropics could work in insular agriculture, and that, since only a few whites fell into this category, the rural labour force would have to consist mainly of blacks. In order to "concilier l'intérêt du planteur avec les droits de l'humanité", the commissioners planned to make liberty conditional on the blacks remaining in agricultural employment. They also envisaged the drafting of severe laws, and the creation of a rural police to prevent the enfranchised from deserting the estates.

The planters opposed the commissioners' plans, because of the economic loss which emancipation without compensation entailed. They resented the loss of privilege that a measure "confondant le maître et l'affranchi" would bring. They were unwilling to accept the application of the constitution of 1795 in the colony. This constitution, with a restricted franchise, would not have ended their monopoly of political power, but it would have reduced insular autonomy, since it declared that : "les colonies sont parties intégrantes de la République et sont soumises aux mêmes lois constitutionnelles". Finally they opposed the constitution because it outlawed slavery.

The plantocracy mobilised popular support against Baco and Burnel by raising the bogey of Saint-Domingue. Regular troops were confined to barracks by the national guard, and the commissioners were expelled from the colony.

For fear of possible retribution for its rebellious actions, the Assembly attempted to justify itself in the eyes of the Directory, by painting the metropolitan agents as reckless men, with dictatorial ambitions, whose plans were designed to bring ruin and anarchy to the colony.

If the assaults of the abolitionists were to be withstood, the colonists needed to legitimise slavery. This institution no longer received official approval, nor could it be justified on moral grounds. The colonists

found a rationale for it in theories of racial inferiority and of the physiological suitability of blacks for tropical labour. They argued that "un homme noir n'est pas un homme comme eux", that blacks were unsuited for liberty, and could not be induced to work voluntarily for wages because of an innate dislike for agricultural labour, a preference for idleness, and wants limited to eating and sleeping. Freedom, they argued, would be followed by mass desertion of the estates and by the growth of an idle and unruly emancipated class.

It is not unlikely that such beliefs were held by Mauritian planters before the 1790's, but it is only in that decade that racialism acquired social importance. It became the force that held the slave system together against external attacks and internal tensions.

The peace of Amiens permitted the restoration of metropolitan authority in île de France. The Colonial Assembly was suspended for a term of ten years, but, not only was the colonial policy of the Consulate designed to restore the status quo ante 1789, but Crespin, the official in charge of drafting colonial legislation, shared the planters' attitudes. This situation provided the opportunity for entrenching racial prejudice by means of legislation. Slaves lost the limited legal protection, which they had enjoyed under the Code Noir, while the slave-owners' power was made more absolute. Because slaves were seen as not assimilable into free society, barriers to selective enfranchisements were erected, and the legal disabilities affecting the class of 'libres', which was pictured as stigmatized by servitude, were increased. (7)

From 1803, when Decaen suspended the colonial constitution of 1791, to 1832, when a nominated Legislative Council was established, Mauritian colonists had no formal political power. Yet they were able to resist external interference in the system of slavery, on which their economic and social status depended, with a certain measure of success.

The planters made their views known to the administration via unofficial bodies such as the 'councils of commune' and the Comité Colonial, which commanded the sympathetic attention of governors R. T. Farquhar, Sir G. Lowry Cole and Sir C. Colville. The governors were kept informed of the state of public opinion by means of numerous memoranda

and petitions, which the colonists addressed to them. The colonists also attempted to put their case directly to the Colonial Office, by appointing British M.P.s, as their 'agents' in London. British merchants, with interests in the island, acted as an informal pressure group in the métropole, on behalf of the colonists; while in 1830-1831 and in 1833, the Comité Colonial dispatched Adrien d'Épinay to Britain as the islanders' accredited representative.

On occasion, planters used the threat of force or of boycotts to promote their interests. Such tactics had little effect on solid personalities, such as Major-General G.J. Hall, or Sir William Nicolay, but the weak-willed Sir Charles Colville may well have been intimidated by the setting up of a volunteer corps, and by the 'inertie', or passive resistance campaign of 1832.

The fact of distance and the slow communications between the island and the métropole, limited the effectiveness of 'government by remote control'. Even with the best of wills, governors could not always promptly carry out metropolitan directives. This situation gave a certain freedom of movement to the 'man on the spot', who was able to delay the implementation of unpopular measures, which he may have been told to enforce in the colony.

Within the limits set by the métropole, governors tended to follow policies generally favourable to the plantocracy. Many of the high officials, surrounding them, were slave-owners and planters. Moreover, from the point of view of the colonial exchequer at least, planters were the most important class economically.

The means for enforcing slave legislation were lacking in the colony. Many lower- and middle-echelon officials were recruited locally, and the country police was headed by the 'commandants de quartier', who were selected amongst the most influential planters in the various districts. British officials, after a lengthy residence in the island, frequently became part of the colonial 'establishment', marrying into local families and investing in sugar plantations. Finally, the judiciary was generally partial to the slave-owners, and the latter were seldom convicted of infringing slave laws.

The first threat to Mauritian slavery consisted in the attempts of abolishing the slave trade. The planters were anxious to introduce

slaves into the island after 1810, to build up the slave stock, which had been depleted by a decline in slave importation, and by high mortality caused by food shortages during the blockade. They were moreover unwilling to bear the increases in production costs, which a ban on slave-trading implied, at least in the short term.

The illicit slave trade to Mauritius probably did not assume the gigantic proportions attributed to it by the Commission of Eastern Inquiry, and by the Anti Slavery Monthly Reporter, but it was certainly considerable. The laws prohibiting the slave trade were only registered in the island in 1813, because of Farquhar's fears that agriculture would have to be abandoned, if war-time shortages in slave numbers were not made good.

Farquhar's whole strategy, for suppressing the slave trade at its source, was ambiguous in its purpose and consequences. The treaty concluded with Radama in 1817, whereby the latter agreed to ban the exportation of slaves from his dominions in return for weapons and ammunition, was really aimed at supporting the extension of Merina rule in the 'Great Island'. The policy was merely "putting a political façade without preventing the traffic", as Hall put it. Indeed, it may have contributed to an increase in slave-trading as Mauritian contacts with Madagascar increased.

East Africa, a secondary but important source of slaves, was not included into Farquhar's scheme until September 1822, when a treaty was concluded with the Imaum of Masqat for abolishing the export of slaves from his possessions. It is uncertain whether this was enforced by the Omani Arabs, who received no compensation for the duties foregone. Merina control of Madagascar, and Omani hegemony in East Africa, were not achieved until 1827 and 1840 respectively, so that even if these treaties had been signed in good faith, they could hardly have been effective.

The sheer difficulty of patrolling thousands of square kilometres of ocean, and the lack of support from Portuguese and French authorities in Mozambique and Bourbon, respectively, limited the effectiveness of steps taken to suppress the illicit traffic at sea after 1819. In Mauritius slave traders were treated indulgently by the Vice-Admiralty Court, headed by George Smith, who was said to be deeply indebted to the planters. From 1813 to 1826, only 2 986 slaves were seized by the Vice-Admiralty Court : this was only a mere fraction of the total number smuggled into the territory.

There was a decline in the volume of the Mauritian slave trade in the early 1820's. It was partly due to Hall's criticism of Farquhar's 'Madagascar policy', which prompted the latter to introduce internal measures for the trade's suppression, after July 1820. Taken together with external measures of suppression, this represented a greater effort than formerly in rooting out the trade. The decline in the trade was also the result of a growing awareness in Mauritius, that participation in it worked against the colonists' interests. The latter realised that, a continuation of this traffic would impair the success of their demands for fiscal parity with the West Indian colonies, and could lead to emancipation of their slaves without compensation.

The achievement of fiscal parity in 1825 partly offset the problem of labour scarcity, which emerged after slave trading ceased. As early as 1829 however Mauritian planters had found a substitute for black slaves in the form of indentured labourers from Asia, and within six years, the slave trade was being resumed under a new guise. (8)

British abolitionists believed that the abolition of slave-trading would lead to a husbanding of the slave-stock, and that the treatment of slaves would improve, as planters adopted measures conducive to natural population growth. Demographic realities meant that this would only occur in the long-term. Abolitionists were unaware of this and, in 1823, when it became apparent that voluntary amelioration was not forthcoming, they shifted their tactics to achieving amelioration through external action.

In Mauritius, the continuation of slave-smuggling had not allowed any long-term pressures for improving the treatment of slaves, or, for utilising slave labour more efficiently, to develop. Sir G. Lowry Cole, who was entrusted with enforcing the amelioration policy, thus had to contend with strong opposition on the part of the planters. He was able to delay implementation of the policy until the end of his term of office. He had been instructed to draft an ordinance, on the basis of the Trinidad Order-in-Council of 10<sup>th</sup> March 1824, which served as a model for amelioration in the Crown colonies. Cole consulted the Comité Colonial on this issue, and amended the original order to such an extent, in his attempts to reconcile colonial and metropolitan opinion, that the Ordinance was disallowed by the Secretary of State.

Sir Charles Colville continued with his predecessor's policy of sounding planter opinion, whenever controversial measures were proposed. He used this knowledge in framing Ordinance 43, of 7<sup>th</sup> February 1829 'for the amelioration of the condition of the Slave Population in the island of Mauritius and its dependencies', which deviated in many respects from the Trinidad Order. Colville's attempts at meeting the planters' objections to the amelioration measure were set at nought by their hostile reaction to its publication. Ten petitions, bearing nearly 800 signatures, were sent to the governor in protest.

These documents are of considerable interest to the historian. They show that, despite the island's remoteness, its inhabitants were fairly well informed about related developments in areas, as far afield as the Cape of Good Hope and the Caribbean.

The planters opposed the amelioration policy in much the same terms as the Colonial Assembly had criticised the decree of 16 pluviôse, An II in the 1790's. Showing some insight in the forces making for the cohesion and stability of slave society, they argued that the slave-owners' authority was not founded on force alone but also on prestige. By lowering the slave-owners' stature in the eyes of their slaves, the amelioration policy was thus fostering indiscipline and insubordination amongst the latter, they claimed. Although the planters exaggerated its extent, there is some evidence that desertion was common amongst the slaves, and that the latter were increasingly unwilling to bear the yoke of slavery. It may well be, as the planters' argument implied, that this was due to a sapping of the psychological foundations of the slave system by the amelioration policy.

The planters called for an increase in the size of the police force and for the passing of repressive measures, including vagrancy laws, to offset the decline in their authority.

Further attempts at modifying the amelioration laws in September 1830, and in March 1832, gave rise to widespread protests in the colony. But there is no evidence that the amelioration policy, which was widely evaded, led to any improvement in the condition of Mauritian slaves.

The amelioration policy was belatedly applied in the island. Its success depended in the final analysis on the willingness of the slave

holders to accept it, and on the willingness, as well as the ability, of the local government to enforce it, but these conditions were missing in Mauritius. (9)

In the second half of 1830, there were persistent rumours in Mauritius, that the British government was contemplating a wholesale emancipation of the twenty to thirty thousand slaves, suspected of having been illicitly introduced into the island. Fears of large-scale expropriation led the colonists to engage in a desperate hold-out action against the threat of looming emancipation. This was reflected in the hysterical tone of their arguments, and in the contradictory claims they put forward.

The colonists felt that the safeguarding of their interests called for the exercise of political rights. They sent d'Epinaÿ to London to put their political demands to the British government, and to defend them against the rumoured emancipation scheme. There is some evidence that 'libres' property-owners also gave their support to this mission.

Although the colonists were not granted representative government, the seven seats they secured on a nominated council, gave them an influential and permanent place in the administration. The composition of the council was nearly always favourable to the plantocracy. Council members were not united on every single issue, but when the health of the sugar-industry was at stake, the divisive influences of language, culture and background were normally offset by the pull of common economic interests.

The Colonial Office set Mauritian fears, of wholesale emancipation without compensation, at rest, but provided for unlawfully enslaved persons to be able to seek their liberty in the courts.

When British colonial slavery was abolished, in August 1833, it was moreover stipulated that compensation would only be granted to persons with legal title to their slaves. At that time, R.M. Thomas estimated that perhaps as many as 5 000 individuals were being illegally detained into slavery in Mauritius, but in the face of planter opposition, and of the partiality of local courts, he was unable to collect sufficient evidence for the liberation of more than a small fraction of this number.

The validity of claims for compensation was subject to verification by a local Commission of Compensation. Overwhelmingly made

up of persons with interests in the sugar industry, this body took steps designed to maximize the compensation payable to the colonists.

The Slave Protector's objections to the make-up of the local commission were overruled by the metropolitan government. Metropolitan policy, with regards to the payment of compensation, was moderated by a number of factors including the political over-reaction of slave-holders to suggestions of emancipation without compensation, the home government's anxiety for avoiding social instability in the colonies and its concern for upholding property rights.

On the whole Mauritian colonists, who had been threatened with large-scale property losses a few years previously, weathered the emancipation storm quite well. (10)

The payment of compensation made an expansion of the Mauritian sugar industry possible, the number of sugar-mills rising from 167 in 1833 to 203 in 1838. This expansion created a demand for labour, one accentuated by the rising proportion of sugar-factories converting to steam. Planters were assured of the labour of their former slaves during the apprenticeship period, but they clearly felt that this was insufficient, as they spent nearly £280 000 on financing the immigration of 25 468 Indian indentured labourers to the colony, from 1834 to 1839.

At this stage, the immigration was halted by the government of India, because it threatened to degenerate into another slave trade. The planters mounted a campaign to obtain a lifting of this ban. They claimed that immigration could be controlled so as to prevent abuses, that Indian immigrants were well treated in Mauritius, and that indentured labour in the island was an attractive outlet for the starving masses of the sub-continent.

At the core of the planters' argument, for a resumption of immigration, was the view that at the end of apprenticeship, the former slaves had deserted plantation agriculture en masse, and that the resulting labour shortage was threatening to ruin the colony.

They explained this phenomenon by saying that blacks had a natural 'disposition to idleness', that they had limited wants, and that they were "ignorant.... of the real value of money", so that the offer of high wages could not induce them to labour.

But the ex-apprentices did not desert the plantations because they had limited wants or lacked money-consciousness. During apprenticeship they were paid for 'overwork', were sometimes given cash in lieu of provisions, and could sell garden produce on their own account. The spreading use of money amongst apprentices was noted by traders, and was reflected in the number who were able to purchase their freedom, which rose from 600 in 1834, to 9 000 in early 1839. Apprentices were aware that the market value of their services was three to four times more than the remuneration they received, and expected to be paid accordingly, on attaining their liberty.

In Mauritius, the availability of alternative means of livelihood set the reserve price of plantation labour quite high. Taking into account the availability of unused cultivable land, population density was quite low. The ex-apprentices were able to purchase freehold plots, to rent land from planters willing to capitalise on rising land values or hoping to secure a supply of casual labour, or they could squat along the coast or on the central uplands. They could cultivate provision crops or fish for a living. The ex-apprentice household could earn supplementary income from the weaving of sugar bags, dress-making, laundering and mat-making. Other occupations available were carting, tavern-keeping and retailing.

The demographic situation in Mauritius, after the cessation of slave-trading, looked alarming as the slave or ex-slave population declined from 63 000 in 1832 to 49 365 in 1846. This decline led several contemporary observers to conclude that the island would never be able to raise an adequate labour force from within its own territory. But, by 1846, the phase of absolute population decrease was at an end, there was near sexual balance in the fertile age-groups, and the ex-apprentice population had gained a potential for natural increase, which it formerly lacked. The problem however, was that the planters, aware that abundant supplies of cheap labour could be obtained in India and knowing that large areas of Mauritius were still uncultivated, were unwilling to gear the expansion of the sugar-industry to the pace of local population increase.

The demands of Mauritian planters for the ban on Indian immigration to be lifted were accepted by the British government. The

decision, early in 1842, to allow a resumption of this immigration under government supervision, is something of a turning point in Mauritian history.

The 1842 decision was motivated by various considerations, which included an acceptance of the planters' explanation of the labour shortage following emancipation, and the corollary that "without the aid to be drawn from a foreign supply of labour, much of the fixed capital at present existing in the sugar colonies, and especially in Mauritius, will become comparatively useless".

The island remained of great strategic importance to Britain until the opening of the Suez canal in 1869. Although its occupation had been a burden to the British Treasury until 1823, the subsequent expansion of the sugar industry generated the funds needed for keeping colonial accounts in the black. The fall in sugar export earnings, and the impact of this on the colonial budget, may well have influenced the British government's decision.

British politicians may have cared little for the economic welfare of a conquered and foreign people, but the island was the Empire's largest single sugar producer. Moreover, British capitalists had invested considerable sums in Mauritian estates, and their interests would be harmed by a collapse of the sugar industry. All these considerations led the British government to place the interests of the plantocracy above those of the emancipated class in 1842. (11)

History is about 'what was' not about 'what might have been'. But the significance of the 1842 decision for Mauritian history can only be gauged in counterfactual terms.

Without access to cheap labour, the planters would have been forced to rationalise the sugar industry. The payment of high wages, to attract plantation workers, would have necessitated the adoption of labour-saving techniques. This shift from a low wage, low productivity, to a high wage, high productivity, employment pattern would not have been easy. Planter attitudes to labour, moulded by slavery and by the events of the 1790's, needed to be changed. Funds for investment in new technology may have been scarce, while there was an immediate need to expand sugar-

cultivation to make earlier investments in sugar-mills, worthwhile. Experimentation was difficult in a situation where profits were depressed by the heavy weight of planter indebtedness, and of labour costs, and by falling prices in external markets.

But this transition may well have taken place in the absence of cheap labour from India. It occurred, immediately after emancipation, in Jamaica and British Guiana, in Guadeloupe and Martinique. The transition would have required a concentration of sugar-growing in the most suitable areas. The end result would almost certainly have been economic diversification, and growing opportunities for peasant production.

Instead, the availability of cheap labour from India reinforced monoculture. The area under cane, which stood at approximately 16 884 hectares in the 1830's, soared to 25 115 hectares in the 1840's and to 46 431 hectares in the 1850's. By 1860, Mauritius had become a vast sugar plantation. It remained one until independence in 1968. Although some economic diversification has taken place since, the island is still dominated by sugar.

Plantation economies, hold out few prospects for self-sustained autonomous development. The bulk of the population is poorly paid and does not provide a market for domestic industry. The economy is therefore dependent on foreign markets and foreign sources of capital, and is therefore highly vulnerable. (12)

As the sugar-industry expanded in the 1840's and 1850's, the independent black peasantry, which was emerging after emancipation, became stunted. Today there are no peasants engaging in subsistence production in Mauritius. The peasants were unable to compete against cheap food imported by the plantations, and they were squeezed off the best land by the expansion of the cane acreage. Until the 1880's, when bad time forced a subdivision of estates and the selling of land to small growers, the planters had had a monopoly of land. But 'morcellement' did not weaken the dominance of sugar, which today still covers more than 90% of the cultivated area.

Plantation society retained its servile basis after 1842. The Indian immigrants at the foundation were for many decades little better off than slaves. At the peak, there was a small minority of 'sugar barons' who monopolised political power till 1948, thus denying the possibility of change

through political action. The benefits flowing from the growth of the sugar industry thus accrued almost exclusively to the planter élite.(13)

Edward Baker criticised the apprenticeship system and the payment of compensation to the planters on the grounds that : "time is afforded for him (the planter) to make experiments as to the best mode of keeping the slave under, after the expected period arrives. "

He added, with considerable foresight : "The consequence is, a system will spring up, aristocratical or oligarchical, against which the slave may struggle a century without attaining that equality, he is vainly thought to possess. "(14)

Notes to Conclusion.

- (1) cf. Chapter 1.
- (2) cited in Pridham, C. - Op.cit. , p. 346.
- (3) Kuczynski, R.R. - Op.cit. , pp. 763,764,854.
- (4) cf. Chapters 2 and 5,3.
- (5) cf. Chapter 2.
- (6) cf. Chapters 4 and 6,2.
- (7) cf. Chapter 3.
- (8) cf. Chapters 5,1 and 5,2.
- (9) cf. Chapters 5,3 and 6,1.
- (10) cf. Chapters 6,1 and 4.
- (11) cf. Chapter 6,2.
- (12) cf. Baldwin, R.E. 'Patterns of Development in Newly Settled Regions' The Manchester School of Economics and Social Studies vol. XXIV,2 (May, 1956)  
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Op.cit. , p. 161.
- (13) cf. Houbert, J. 'Neo-Colonialism Refortified? The Case of Mauritius' in Kemp, A.G. (ed) Africa and the EEC in the Aftermath of Lomé and UNCTAD IV, Aberdeen University African Studies Group, Aberdeen, 1977  
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- (14) cited in Extracts from the Letters of James Backhouse.... -Op.cit. , p. 74.

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