

# The Amelioration Proposals

## Introduction:

The word 'ameliorate' means to improve or make better. The Amelioration Proposals were therefore designed to improve the conditions of the enslaved on the plantations.

The British Parliament accepted the proposals that were put forward by the West India Lobby. These absentee planters felt that England would delay the abolition process if the planters treated their slaves better. Besides it was only sensible on their part to treat the enslaved better so that they could live and work longer since they could no longer get slaves to buy.

England liked the idea. She was alarmed at the violent response of both planters and enslaved to the Registry Bill and thought that this would actually help the 'relationship' between the two parties. She was also afraid that what happened in Haiti could also happen in any one of her colonies given the anger and resentment that had been building up. The enslaved would certainly revolt if there was no improvement in their horrid conditions.



The Abolitionists also supported the bill. They felt that something needed to be done about the inhumane conditions that existed on the sugar estates. In fact they had drafted their own set of amelioration proposals to present to Parliament. The Secretary of State Lord Bathurst dispatched the proposals to the colonies.

### **The Proposals**

- (a) Females slaves should no longer be flogged
- (b) There was to be no more flogging in the fields.
- (c) There was to be a day between the time the male committed the offence and the day on which he is flogged
- (d) A record is to be kept of more than three lashes. This should be handed in to the magistrate every quarter.
- (e) Slave families should not be separated
- (f) The enslaved should be encouraged to get married
- (g) Slaves should not be sold or given away to cover debts (in lieu of payment of debts)
- (h) The Sunday market should end. The enslaved should be given Sundays to go to Church and Saturdays to go to market.
- (i) Religious instructions should be provided for the enslaved
- (j) The enslaved could testify in court if a religious official could vouch for their integrity.
- (k) Saving banks should be opened for the enslaved
- (l) The enslaved had the right to purchase his or her freedom (manumission)

### **Reaction**

As was expected the Jamaican planters were furious. They refused to adopt the proposals. The planters in Barbados argued that they had done the enslaved enough favors already. They felt that their enslaved should be contented with what they had provided. St. Vincent and Dominica had the same reaction.

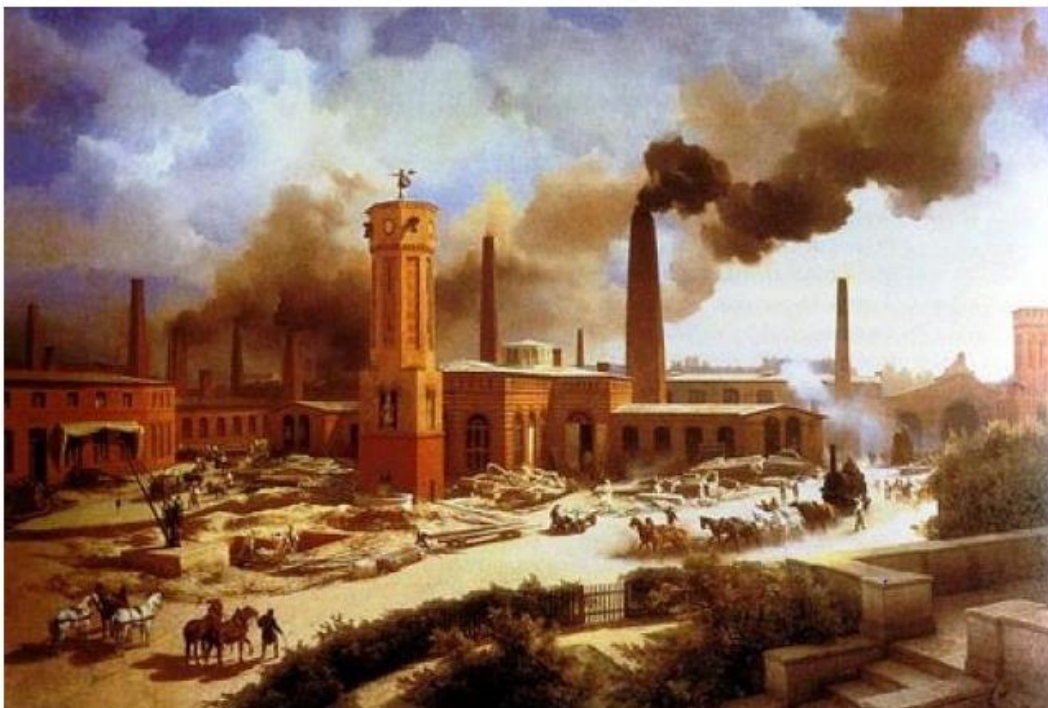
In Demarara, the planters chose to delay the enactment of the Proposals. The enslaved misunderstood and thought the emancipation papers had come. They

began a revolt: Demarara revolt 1823. The planters blamed the Non-Conformist missionaries. They imprisoned the Rev. John Smith who unfortunately died while incarcerated.

The failure of the Amelioration Proposals prompted the Abolitionists to form the Anti-Slavery Society in that same year-1823. There were 122 branches of the society in England within a year's time. The support for the ending of slavery was gaining a lot of ground. A number of factory workers, industrialists, economists, investors had joined the movement.

For the next 10 years they worked feverishly to get Parliament to pass the law to end slavery throughout the British Empire. Success came in 1833.

England had entered her Industrial Revolution. The revenue from her West Indian sugar estates could not be compared with the huge profits from her industrialization. Since she was the first to become industrialized she was the sole person selling manufactured goods to the entire Europe and the newly freed Latin American countries. She was nicknamed the 'workshop of the world'.



Britains Industrial Revolution

There were also important political changes and development as well. In 1832, England passed the Reform Act. Everyone except the poor could now vote. This meant that there was a decrease in the number of absentee planters who became Members of Parliament (M.P.) and an increase in the number of M.P. who were factory owners and industrialists. The new government that came to power was also in favor of abolition.