



*Extracts from Despatches from the Governor of Barbados*

Barbados 16<sup>th</sup> May 1976

My Lord,

In addition to the facts mentioned in the despatches \_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_, r respecting the conditions of the labouring population in that \_\_\_\_\_ district of Barbados where the recent riots began, and from which they seemed to radiate I have the honour (?) to lay before your Lordship a copy of the proceedings of an Inquest held at 'Clifden Estate' on a black man named Samuel Bottin in 1870.

2) Clifden Estate is about half a mile from the Byde Mill Estate and adjoining the latter is Hatton Estate.

3) The witness, --- Moses, swears that he is the superintendent at Clifden. Samuel Bottin used to work on the Estate at a bit (10 cents) a day. Having heard that the doors of Bottin's house had been seen open for two days, the witness states:-

"I said, 'well I suppose he is dead in the house' I made the remark because I knew he was weak and wanted care and food. I had work to do or I would have gone to his house to look for him as soon as I heard his doors were open."

4) The next witness, the wife or refuted wife of the deceased, described how she went to the sea alone to get some eggs (\_\_\_\_), leaving her husband alone in the house where some days after he was found dead by his daughter. This witness says:

"Deceased worked for 10 cents each day.....

5) The manager of the estate, Mr Thomas Henry Keston, is the next witness. The whole of his evidence is as follows:-

"I am the manager of Clifden Estate. I knew Samuel Bottin he was a tenant and labourer on this estate when I took over the estate 5 years ago I found deceased working for ten cents a day I had a took with Mr Haynes about him, as he asked me for more wages, and Mr Haynes raised his wages to twelve cents. Deceased paid twenty one cents a week for a piece of land he only got the twelve cents when he worked for a day. He seldom worked for a whole week. Three days was about the average, some weeks he did nothing for a whole week, the following week he had fifty two cents to pay. He looked very weak, and \_\_\_\_ as he walked, going from one side of the road to the other.

6) The medical officer who made the Post Mortem examinations, Dr Piggott says :-

“The body was that of a middle aged man of about fifty years at most, - it exhibited no marks of violence but was emaciated to the last degree. It was also so much decomposed that I consider death must have taken place not less than thirty-six hours ago. An internal examination of the various cavities (?) revealed not the \_\_\_\_ trace of disease, but only a general wasting of the tissues, the result of a long continuance of defective nutrition. The intestinal canal was completely empty which showed that the deceased had been without food, certainly for a couple of days before his death. From these appearances now described I can only conclude that the deceased came to death from defective nutrition, or a continual want of sufficient or proper food.”

7) The Coroners have returned the following verdict:-

“that the said Samuel Bottin on the eleventh day of August \_\_\_\_, came to his death through want of common necessities of life, and not otherwise.

8) The Governor must \_\_\_\_ inform this Inquisition is - how this is a sad case R to R 17.8.70

9) I lay the \_\_\_\_ facts of this case before your Lordship, because they seem to throw more light into the real conditions of the Barbados Labourers than voluminous despatches from Governor, or from eloquent debates in the house of Assembly. the fact of the man dying, all alone, after two days without any food, and when his condition was enforced by the \_\_\_\_ of labourers, is significant.

10 ) Your Lordship will observe the admission of KW Keston, the manager that Samuel Bottin earned on average 31 cents a week from which 20 cents was engulfed by the \_\_\_\_ for rent thus leaving the labourer five pence at the end of the week.

### **Glossary**

**Despatches** – written messages (sent quickly)

**labouring population** –the workers

**inquest** – an investigation to find out why somebody died

**verdict** – conclusion/ decision about the cause of death

**emaciation** = to become extremely thin through