

3 King Street

Aberdeen

Scotland

13th June 1938

Hon: Colonial Secretary

Colonial Office

London

England.

Dear Sir,

Unfortunately, I have not had an acknowledgment of my previous letter to you, but that will not prevent me from stressing the deplorable conditions under which Jamaican labourers are forced to live and work. It is quite possible that my appeals will be like "seeds falling on stony ground" but I shall have the satisfaction of knowing that I have done my share to help expose the conditions of modern slavery which exists in Jamaica, after all this boast of "British is Best".

Conditions in the island are such that frankly I am ashamed to be British.

Whether you wish to believe it or not Sir, the riots are the direct result of the wicked oppression of BLACK by WHITE- in other words colour prejudice!

It is not only the labourers who suffer as a result of this subtle form of British colour prejudice, but they suffer more because oppression over a period of years as reduced them to a state of helplessness.

Resentment of colour prejudice was shown during the last elections of members of the Legislature of the Island which resolved itself into a black versus white competition in which I am glad to say (even although at the time I was sorry, not yet having experienced a sample of your home prejudice) that black won. Now it has been the turn of the under-dogs to rebel, and they have chosen the only available means of obtaining a hearing.

Past commissions have done very little to improve conditions. In my opinion it would be far better to get a full report from those in Jamaica who have the interest of the labourers at heart and who know far more than your commissioners will ever find out. If men like Lord Olivier and the late Sir Alexander James Swettenham [Governor of Jamaica 1904-1907] (a 'god-send' to Jamaica) were allowed to have their own way things would not have reached such a deplorable state.

During the years 1914-1918, Jamaicans, to a man, offered to fight for "King and Country". Conscription was not necessary. In all probability, Africans and Indians were just as keen.

Today, I am convinced that Indians, Africans and West Indians would only be too glad to stand aloof in order to expose the folly of this underhand British prejudice in an Empire which is made up of some 70% coloured peoples.

Britain is fast becoming the laughingstock of the world and will continue to be as long she does not realise that many of us know the difference between "diplomacy" and hypocrisy.

You may if you wish Sir, regard me as a fanatic or even a lunatic, but I wish to assure you that there are few Britishers more loyal than I am or indeed than any Jamaican is, but we all know what happens when a kingdom becomes divided against itself, and this is fast happening to Britain.

It is not too late to improve conditions, not only in the West Indies but throughout the Empire, and I trust that a sincere effort is being made to do so.

Yours truly,

R. S. Peat

P.S. The Jamaican Government has done a great deal for the peasants. It is the cane [sugar] and banana companies that exploit cheap labour. Britain could do more for Jamaica. She could at any rate put a 15 year bar on Chinese [China] and also buy more sugar from us.