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JOHN CARMICHAEL: SU VIDA Y SUS SUEÑOS EN LA FRONTERA DE AMERICA CENTRAL

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RÉSUMÉ

Plus d´un historien de cette région a soutenu que les activités des Britanniques en Amérique Centrale, au milieu du XIX siècle ont manqué de la conscience, de l´habileté et de la perspicacité propres à un grand projet qui se voudrait "Impérialiste". La politique comme l´intérêt portés par les Britanniques à cette région se sont traduits à bien des égards, par des actions brèves, sans suivi. Pourtant ce fut justement la trivialité de ces accords, parfois bizarrres d´un petit nombre de Britanniques en Amérique Centrale qui, à plusieurs reprises, a mis en difficulté le pouvoir de la Grande Bretagne dans les affaires du littoral caribéen. Pour illustrer ce thème, l´auteur va explorer la vie et les activités d´un individu, l´ entrepreneur britannique John Carmichael, qui s´était lancé dans le commerce de l´acajou, les activités d´importation et d´exportation, grand propriétaire foncier, adjudicataire du canal, régisseur et intermédiaire entre les rebelles mayas de Santa Cruz et la colonie du Honduras Britannique (Belize).

SAMENVATTING

Het wordt algemeen aanvaard onder historici van het Caraïbisch gebied dat de Britse activiteiten in Centraal-Amerika in de negentiende eeuw geen uitdrukking waren van een groots "imperialistisch" project. De Britse politiek en belang in de regio waren meer op de handel van korte duur gericht. Precies wegens deze toevallige en vreemde activiteiten van Britse onderdanen in Centraal-Amerika raakte de Britse macht voortdurend in problemen wat betreft zaken van de Caraïbische kust. Om dit onderwerp nader te kunnen analyseren wordt het artikel gewijd aan het leven en de activiteiten van een Britse ondernemer, John Carmichael: een handelaar in de mahok boom, importeur en exporteur, plantage-eigenaar, contractant van de kanaal, verhuurder en bemiddelaar tussen de opstandige mayas van Santa Cruz, México, en de Britse kolonie (Belize).

JOHN CARMICHAEL: LIFE AND DESIGN ON THE FRONTIER IN CENTRAL AMERICA

PAUL SULLIVAN*

ABSTRACT

At least one historian of the region has argued that British activities in Central America in the mid-nineteenth century lacked the awareness, continuity, shrewdness, and proficiency of any grand design that might be called "imperialist policy." British policy towards the region and British interest in the region were in many regards fleeting and mercurial. Rather, it was the petty and at times curious involvements of British individuals in Central America that time and again entangled the power of Great Britain in the affairs of the Caribbean littoral. To further explore that question raised by others, this paper examines the life and activities of one such British entrepreneur, John Carmichael — mahogany man, import-export merchant, sugar planter, canal contractor, renter, and middleman between the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz and the colony of British Honduras.
Key words: *Nineteenth century mahogany trade; British foreign policy in Belize, Yucatan and Central America; the Mosquito Coast, War of Castes and the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz; Inter-Oceanic canal; illegal arms and munitions trade, Belize-Yucatan.*

RESUMEN

Más de un historiador de la región ha argumentado que las actividades de los Británicos en América Central a mediados del siglo diecinueve, carecían de la conciencia, habilidad y perspicacia de cualquier gran proyecto que soñara con llamarse "imperialista". La política británica hacía la región y el interés británico en la región fueron, en muchos aspectos, mercuriales y breves. Más bien, fueron precisamente estos compromisos triviales, y a veces extraños, de individuos británicos en América Central que una y otra vez enredaron el poder de la Gran Bretaña en los asuntos del litoral caribeño. Para profundizar más en el tema, este artículo explora la vida y actividades de uno de estos empresarios ejemplares, John Carmichael: un hombre dedicado al comercio de la caoba, importaciones y exportaciones, hacendado, contratista del canal, arrendatario, e intermediario entre los rebeldes Mayas de Santa Cruz y la colonia de Honduras Británica (Belice).
Palabras clave: *Comercio de caoba en el siglo XIX; política exterior británica en Belice, Yucatán y Centroamérica; Costa Mosquito, guerra de castas y la rebelión maya de Santa Cruz; canal interoceánico, comercio ilegal de armas y municiones, Belice-Yucatán*

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Introduction

John Carmichael led an interesting life

During most of his adult years, either while living in Birkenhead across the river from Liverpool or in exile in the American tropics, Bahamas-born Carmichael was intimately engaged in the turbulent economic and political life of the still young republics of Mexico and Central America.[1] Various scholars writing about episodes in Costa Rican, Nicaraguan, Honduran or Mexican history, or about the British protectorate on the Mosquito Coast or the British colony at Belize, have had occasion to mention John Carmichael. A history of the American mahogany trade through Liverpool and London (and thence to continental Europe) would have to mention him as well. Scholars interested in this field or that have upon encountering Carmichael handled him like the proverbial blind men of Hindustan "who went to see the Elephant... that each by observation might satisfy his mind" (Saxe, 1963). Seizing upon one part or another of Carmichael's economic and political anatomy —financier and mortgagee, mahogany cutter and importer, inter-oceanic canal contractor, plantation owner and operator, rentier, foreign claimant, or agent of British authority in a colonial realm— scholars have accordingly categorized and labeled him and assigned him his place in the workings of the world capitalist system or British imperialism. These scholars have not been entirely in error. Yet, again like those blind men of Hindustan, "each was partly in the right, and all were in the wrong".

An examination of Carmichael's entire career, so far as sources permit, provides a more complete and fine-grained appreciation of the motives and actions of this seemingly ubiquitous entrepreneur. That is obvious. That such an extended examination makes any difference to how the history of the Mosquito Coast, the mahogany industry, the sugar industry of northern Belize, or British relations with the rebel Maya is written, is probably much less clear. But it does make a difference, I argue in this paper. One supposes that men like Carmichael were but transient embodiments of grander economic and political systems, or of the character of historical moments. And that no purpose is served by delv-

[1] John Carmichael was born in the Bahamas in 1804, give or take a year, according to the 1851 census of England (HO107 / 2175 fol. 188). My thanks to Michael Watts for locating that datum for me.

ing far into where men like Carmichael came from nor whence they removed when they exited the scene of our delimited historical inquiries. Yet, while they lent their bodies and their lives to the functioning of such larger systems, people like Carmichael sometimes endowed those systems with part of their own character and purposes. Robert Naylor has argued this persuasively in his detailed study of British involvement on the Mosquito Shore and in the Bay of Honduras. Dismissing the then popular construction of supposed grand British designs in that area (theories that still have resonance today in the writing of modern historians), Naylor was forced to conclude that:

> A closer examination of British activities in Central America... does not reveal the formidable design attributed to them. Premeditated and calculated maneuvering appears to be missing. British involvement on the Mosquito Shore and neighboring areas reveals an almost ludicrous set of petty circumstances whereby the power of Great Britain became unwittingly entangled in matters of little consequence. The allegation that the British presence on the Mosquito Shore and in the Bay of Honduras was indicative of imperialistic designs on Central America implied an awareness, a continuity, and a proficiency on the part of the British government that the evidence does not seem to bear out (Naylor, 1989, 16).

Though Naylor focused on an earlier period than concerns me in this paper, that observation seems applicable well on into the nineteenth century. "British policy" and "British interests" in this region were fleeting, mercurial things. Where "awareness, continuity, and proficiency" are to be found is not in the workings of British foreign policy nor, until later, of British corporations, but rather in the lives, purposes, and character of men like John Carmichael.

My interest in Carmichael was kindled by the key role he played from 1865 to 1871 as intermediary between the rebel Maya Indians of Santa Cruz and the authorities of British Honduras (and by extension, the British Foreign Office). Mexicans back then understandably vilified the British for their supposed neutrality in the long Indian war known as the War of the Castes. Rebel Maya who revolted against Hispanic rule, who survived intensive efforts to subdue them, and who preyed for years after upon the frontier of Yucatán relied on residents of the British colony for their arms and gunpowder, and for the myriad necessities of life that they did not provide for themselves. During an

especially important phase of that long conflict, when the rebel Maya enjoyed supremacy in much of the eastern quarter of the Yucatán Peninsula, John Carmichael was instrumental in assuring that amicable relations between the colony and the rebel Maya would continue and mature, despite repeated, dangerous moments when those relations seemed to fail. But why did he do that? Was he an agent of a nefarious British policy of territorial expansion on the Yucatán Peninsula? Was he an angel of politico-financial retribution, British "support" for the rebel Maya serving to punish Mexico for its default on loans floated in London? Was he serving still more base, if less complex, motives, seeking to exploit for personal advantage the legendary (if largely illusory) natural riches of the Yucatán Peninsula under cover of his rebel Maya friends who kept legitimate Mexican authority at bay? Was it land itself that motivated him as he grew to become one of the largest landowners in the colony, to whom dozens must pay rent and provide labor for the plots they farmed or the houses in which they lived? Perhaps Carmichael was that most base of all the denizens on the northern frontier of the colony —one of those Englishmen and refugee Mexicans who for greed alone plied the Maya with the weapons to wield brutally against largely defenseless civilians across the Yucatán Peninsula?

The answers to these questions must lie in an understanding of Carmichael's career in northern Belize, and that career is hardly intelligible without knowledge of just how Carmichael ended up there, and what experience he brought with him that was applicable to survival on yet another troubled colonial frontier. The answers to those questions lie as well in our best judgment of what Carmichael was trying to achieve in his life, and how maintaining friendly relations with the rebel Maya was important to his personal goals.

John Carmichael and the Mahogany Trade

Carmichael's involvement on the north coast of Honduras apparently began in the early 1830s with the import/export trade through Omoa. Omoa, with a population then of around 2000, was the principal port for the inland departments of Honduras. European and American manufactures which entered Omoa even found their way to points as distant as the Guatemalan highlands and El Salvador. From Omoa, in turn, were exported to Europe and the United States the principal products of Hon-

duras: silver, mahogany, cattle hides, tobacco, indigo, and sarsaparilla. Live cattle were also shipped from there, for use in mahogany works in British Honduras and Yucatán (Squier, 1855, 101).

It is not clear whether Carmichael then lived in Omoa or Belize.[2] In any event, he was probably then more than a prosperous shopkeeper was. He already had, or soon would, enter the increasingly lucrative game of the accommodation system, which would enjoy an extraordinary expansion and eventually catastrophic bust over the next three decades. A player like Carmichael would obtain loans and credits in England to purchase manufactured goods for export to the Americas. The sale of the goods in the Americas generated obligations to pay that could, passed through various hands, be converted into commodities to be exported and sold back in England, like mahogany, for instance. Or the obligations themselves were exported and used, on the other side of the Atlantic, as payment for imported goods, again, like mahogany. That this kind of business, with every increasing financial complexity and trickery, contributed to the extraordinary expansion of Trans-Atlantic commerce to England is well known. Just how it worked for those trading with Central America, rather than the United States, awaits further research to clarify.

The accommodation system could involve a delicate balancing act. It was, or could become, a house of cards upset by one or another participant's inability to meet obligations to pay for goods or credits obtained. Political disturbances, a large fluctuation in commodity prices, currency crises, and the like, periodically threatened to bankrupt the less nimble of players. Carmichael battled such risks his whole life long, beginning, if not before, with the occupation of Omoa in 1832 by conservative forces seeking to overthrow the liberal president of the Central American Federation. In need of quick cash for arms purchases, the commander of the forces that occupied Omoa seized a species shipment soon to depart for Belize, and he compensated the aggrieved owners with less valuable cochineal stolen from Izabal. The resulting upset in trade allegedly cost Carmichael dearly and for years to come he sought (with partial success) compensation from Central American authorities.[3]

[2] John Cockburn, Government House, British Honduras, 1 February 1832, AB, r. 6c, indicates that Carmichael, an Omoa merchant, came to see him the previous month.

[3] Carmichael's claim is partially documented in John Cockburn to the Magistrate of Honduras, 24 January 1832, AB, r. 8b, and John Cockburn 1 February 1832, AB, r. 6c. I assume

Later in the 1830s, with the exhaustion of mahogany resources within even the recently expanded frontiers of British Honduras, and with the liberalization of tariffs that once had favored Belize-cut wood (or wood that could be passed off as cut in British Honduras), over wood cut elsewhere on the Caribbean littoral, Belizean cutters turned their attention to the north coast of Honduras. In the process, they rediscovered to their own advantage that the existence of the Mosquito Kingdom left orphan by Anglo-Spanish treaties of the previous century (Naylor, 1989, 113).

The richest and most accessible mahogany stands of that region were well west of what anyone had previously supposed might belong to the Mosquito Kingdom, on the Román and Limón (sometimes Limas) Rivers, the nearest port to which was Trujillo. Trujillo functioned for its region much as Omoa did for its, though perhaps without the long-distance connection the latter had to the Pacific coast of Central America. Its population in the early 1840s was between one and two thousand; over half of those being the Black Caribs who would predominate as laborers in mahogany operations along that coast (Squier, 1855, 102-3, 179, 216; Young, 1847, 140-41).

The arrival of Belize-based loggers on the Honduran coast almost immediately generated conflict over the ill-defined boundary between the Mosquito Kingdom and Honduras or the Central American Federation. This was not yet a conflict between Hispanic sovereignty and British imperialism, though from early on it was argued in such terms. Behind the competing claims of the Mosquito Kingdom and Honduras or Central America lay the competing interests of Belize-based loggers and merchants, some of whom sought to advance their cause through alliance with Central American authorities, others through manipulation of Mosquito authorities and the Mosquito entity. Marshall Bennett, the largest of Belizean loggers, cut his deal with Francisco Morazán, former president of the Central American Federation, forming a partnership with him for extraction of mahogany along the coast. The similarly formidable combination of Forbes and Hyde, the latter among the largest landowners of British Honduras threw their lot to the Mosquito Kingdom and claimed from the latter a competing right to cut mahogany near Trujillo.[4]

that the incident about which Carmichael complained was that described in U.S. Consulate, Trujillo, to Edward Livingston, Secretary of State, 28 February 1832, NA, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Omoa, Microform T-477, r. 1.

[4] Naylor (1989, 132). Forbes and Hyde received in 1836 a concession from the Mosquito authority to cut mahogany along the Limón River. Rodriguez (1964, 126-127). By the

In 1836 Carmichael was in Edinburgh, Scotland, marrying the Scottish-born Sarah Ann Hutchinson. She was the daughter of a man much like himself, a prosperous merchant in the trade between Great Britain and Trinidad, and for good measure her mother's siblings were ensconced in the British Linen Company bank.[5] While British loggers returned to Honduras, Carmichael took up permanent residence in Birkenhead, across the Mersey River from Liverpool, the principal port of England's Atlantic and Caribbean trade.[6] He lived in Hamilton Square with his wife and children (four or five born during the 1840s) and commuted to his office at Trafford Chambers on South John Street in Liverpool.[7] It was a good spot for Carmichael to commence ascending the hierarchy of credit and society, positioning himself to become more than a bit player on the Central American scene. The timber trade through Liverpool had expanded dramatically in the first half of the 19th century (250% between 1820 and 1850), and Liverpool surpassed London as the principal port of entry for that commodity (though not specifically for mahogany, in 1850 London still outpaced Liverpool in imports of that wood).[8] The construction of docks, warehouses, and rail facilities

following year, the superintendent of Belize was intervening to support the claim of Forbes and Hyde over Bennett and Morazán, igniting, as Naylor explains, renewed interest in the Mosquito boundary question.

[5] On 20 September 1836 he married Sarah Ann Hutchinson, "daughter of the late John Hutchinson Esquire, Merchant in Trinidad", resident of up-scale Great King Street in central Edinburgh. Register of Banns and Marriages, Parish of Edinburgh, County of Edinburgh, Scotland, which extract was provided to me by the General Register Office for Scotland. Sarah's mother's maiden name was Goold, and her siblings and in-laws were tellers and clerks with the British Linen Company in Edinburgh. That information comes thanks to Charlotte Crowe of Edinburgh, who checked for me in the Sasine Abridgements for Midlothian and the 1841 census of Scotland.

[6] Carmichael's first daughter, Jessie, was born in Birkenhead in 1840, which fact is indicated by the record of her baptism in the Birkenhead (Church of England) Parish Register (10 December 1840), and by the 1851 census of England (Hamilton Square, North Birkenhead, HO107 / 2175 fol. 188), Michael Watts, personal communication.

[7] The children were Jessie, born in 1840; George Gould, born in 1842; Sarah Ann, born in 1844; possibly one named Jane, born in 1845; William Hutchinson born in 1846; Frances, born in 1847, and Elizabeth Gould, born in 1848. Still more children would come in the 1850s. Principal sources for these facts are the Birkenhead Parish Register and the 1851 census of England, already cited. Carmichael's business address comes from an 1841 directory of Liverpool, personal communication, Michael Watts.

[8] In 1850 18 000 tons of mahogany entered the port of London, to 13 000 entering Liverpool (Baines, 1852, 8). Concerning the more general history of timber imports through Liverpool, see Williams (1966, 103-121). Unless otherwise attributed, my general observations about the timber trade in Liverpool come from that source.

across the river at Birkenhead during the 1840s heralded a further expansion of that trade, growth in which Carmichael participated.[9]

Timber was Liverpool's most important import, after cotton and corn, and timber merchants in Liverpool represented a prominent and then somewhat unique group of importers. They tended to be vertically integrated to an extent not common in other branches of the merchant business there. They owned or controlled their own timber works, owned many of the ships that transported the timber to Liverpool, and controlled the marketing of the product after its arrival in England.

As Carmichael entered the mahogany trade, he apparently did so as a prototypical, vertically integrated Liverpool timber merchant. He owned at least one vessel for transporting mahogany, *The Atlantic*; he owned the mahogany shipped until auction or sale in England.[10] He also acquired direct ownership of logging operations in Central America when in 1845 he bought out Archibald Montgomery who had a mahogany operation on the Román River on the north coast of present-day Honduras.

Montgomery had been cutting wood under a Honduran concession. For each tree felled he paid a tax to Honduras, and the vessels that brought supplies and carried off his mahogany were entered and cleared at the local Honduran port of Trujillo. It seems that when Carmichael acquired the works he intended to continue operating as had Montgomery, in evident recognition that the Román River, including the left or eastern bank where the works were located, was Honduran, not Mosquito, territory.[11] Carmichael had his reasons for pursuing his interest

[9] Concerning the construction of docks and warehouses at Birkenhead, the first of which opened in 1847, I rely upon "Opening of the Birkenhead docks and park", *The Illustrated London News*, vol. X, no. 258, 10 April 1847, pp. 229-230.

[10] That Carmichael owned *The Atlantic* and sold product via dockside auction in Birkenhead comes from "The Mahogany Trade, Sale of a Monster Log at Birkenhead", *The Illustrated London News*, vol. XVI, no. 420, 6 April 1850, p. 228. The log in question had been cut on Carmichael's concession in Honduras and transported on *The Atlantic*, owned, the article said, by Carmichael and Company. Few if any timber merchants could transport their entire product on their own ships. During the three-year period, 1849-1851 Carmichael received his mahogany at Liverpool or London off the decks of a score of ships, most of which he surely did not own. Source: John Carmichael, Liverpool, to The Earl of Clarendon, Foreign Office, London, 26 May 1856, PRO, FO 39 / 30, 26973.

[11] Citing British Foreign Office documents I have not seen, Olien noted that when it was discovered that Mathé and Company —i.e. a Carmichael company— was paying taxes to Honduras for trees cut on the Román, Mathé and Company lost its contract to serve as bookkeepers to the Mosquito government (Olien, 1987, 256-287).

on the left bank of the Román River under cover of others —Antonio Mathé and Company.[12] One assumes that this was to compartmentalize assets and credit obligations in such a fashion that should part of the long chain of debt and credit fail, it would not wipe out all Carmichael's financial interests and assets.[13]

Not long after having acquired the Montgomery works on the Román River, Carmichael switched from recognizing Honduran sovereignty over that territory to asserting Mosquito sovereignty over the same. He had three reasons for doing so. First, the Mosquito authority offered a better deal. Honduras charged per tree felled and required that imports and exports be cleared through Trujillo, subjecting the same to possible duties. The Mosquito authority only charged a small, flat annual fee —$20— and sought to exert no control or scrutiny over imports and exports.[14]

Secondly, Carmichael was responding to the urging of the British Agent and Consul General to the Mosquito Nation who sought to ex-

[12] *The New York Herald*, 19 March 1853.

[13] One of the challenges of this kind of investigation is establishing which of the various corporate entities the historian encounters in the documents were "genuine" companies or partnerships, and which were just fronts or holding companies for others. Antonio Mathé and Company seems to me to have been just a front for John Carmichael. This interpretation is suggested by the following: The Belize correspondent for *The New York Herald* wrote that "In 1848 [sic.] Mr. Montgomery sold his entire interest in Honduras to John Carmichael & Co., who established a house here, under the name and firm of Antonio Mather [sic.] & Co" (*The New York Herald*, 19 March 1853). When Honduran action damaged his interests on the Román, Carmichael and Mathé both signed a protest from Belize, but in all other correspondence concerning the matter over many years to come, no mention was again made of any Mathé interest in the Román operations. Still elsewhere Carmichael revealed that "...I have no Partner in my business: I carry on business in England in my own name, but for the purposes of monetary distinction in drawing and accepting Bills, I trade in Belize under the style of 'John Carmichael & Co.' My Representatives in Belize therefore were not well aquatinted with my operations in the Mosquito Territory and were ignorant of the extent of my profits". (John Carmichael, Liverpool, to Earl of Clarendon [Foreign Office Secretary], 26 May 1856, PRO, FO 39/30, 26973.) Yet another source reported that Carmichael's business on the Román River was "superintended for him by Messrs. Mathé and Company of Belize". W.D. Christie, King's House, Jamaica, to Colonel Fancourt, Belize City, 22 July 1846, AB, r. 27. Thanks to Ueli Hostettler for providing me with a copy of that source.

[14] Naylor (1989, 163). That Montgomery had been paying Honduras appears contradicted by a report that he sought Mosquito approval for his operation on the Román River. But Montgomery may simply have been exploring the feasibility of switching allegiances. British Residency and Consulate General, Bluefields, Mosquitia, to Viscount Palmerston, London, 19 March 1847, AB, r. 27. Thanks to Ueli Hostettler for bringing that document to my attention.

tend Mosquito territory as Far West along the Honduran coast as he feasibly could. Patrick Walker had been appointed to that post after the death of Mosquito King Robert Charles Frederick in October 1842. Walker was sent to stabilize the situation on the Mosquito Coast in the wake of the king's death, and to continue there as adviser to the new Mosquito King. Walker had a young, new king crowned in 1845. While the boy-king played, Walker ruled in Mosquitia and aggressively pursued the defense and expansion of the ill-defined Mosquito realm, in furtherance, actually, of British strategic concerns in Central America. Those concerns, in the 1840s, focused principally not on territorial gain as such, but on preventing (through territorial expansion of Mosquitia) that the isthmus be dominated by any other major power, the United States in particular. Great Britain schemed and fumbled over the next few years to assure its own access to a further inter-oceanic canal in the region. It then seemed that the most likely route for such a canal would be up the San Juan River, which Walker labored to make sure was included within the stretched boundaries of the Mosquito realm. Meanwhile, at the other end of the Mosquito realm, in the northwest, British mahogany cutters were enlisted to show the flag and assert otherwise non-existent Mosquito authority in that area. It was evidently at Walker's explicit urging that Carmichael came to recognize Mosquitia as the source of his logging concession.[15]

Carmichael had yet a third reason for signing up with the Mosquito cause. On the Román River he found himself in most direct competition for mahogany with another Belize-based logger, James Welsh. Welsh had commenced his Honduran adventures much as had Carmichael, as a merchant in Trujillo. One of his activities involved buying up cut mahogany for consignment to President Morazán. After the death of Morazán, Welsh himself bought a mahogany concession held by a Trujillo widow whose husband had received Honduran permission to cut trees on both sides of the Román River. That put Welsh in direct competition with Carmichael for the mahogany stands on the East Side of the Román.

[15] Naylor (1989, 151-159). That it was Walker who enlisted Carmichael comes from James Green, Consul, Woburn, to Earl of Clarendon [Foreign Office], 30 September 1853, PRO, FO 39/30 26973. Green had been a member of Walker's "Council of State" created in 1846, and in addition to attesting to Walker's having urged and assured Carmichael, Green noted that "It was Mr. Walker's Policy to establish works on that particular spot for the purpose of exercising and maintaining the right of the Mosquito Government to that part of the Territory".

Also if Honduras was going to back Welsh, Carmichael had to find a comparable ally among the real or pseudo-nation-states of the world, i.e. the Mosquito nation, behind whom, Carmichael hoped, stood firmly Great Britain.[16]

Once Carmichael recognized Mosquito authority over his side of the Román River, he ceased using the Honduran port of Trujillo and instead constructed facilities further east at Limas, the mouth of the Limón River. There he built warehouses and offices, and erected a public building to be used by Mosquito officials —not that there were then any on that stretch of coast so distant from the places any Mosquitos actually lived. Walker did soon send a British vice consul to reside there, George Pithketly, who conveniently also became the manager of Carmichael's mahogany operations. Meanwhile, further inland, along the winding course of the Román River and between the Román and the Limón Rivers, Carmichael's workers labored in seasonal mahogany camps that increasingly attracted the attention of his rival Welsh and Honduras, too.[17]

In 1847, Welsh sent logging crews across the Román to harvest as many mahogany trees as they could before Carmichael's crews got them. To back up Welsh and assert its own authority on that side of the controversial river, Honduras established a small garrison on the east bank and called upon Carmichael to surrender his works to Welsh. To support Carmichael and assert Mosquito authority there, the British consul in Bluefields sent a detachment of Mosquito authority police to the area to require that the Hondurans withdraw. The Hondurans did. In December a British warship visited Trujillo to compel the Hondurans to withdraw their small forces still further west from the Román River, and again the Hondurans reluctantly complied. Back in Liverpool, Carmichael lodged a claim against the Honduran government, alleging that he had suffered substantial damages from the brief incursions. His was probably among the claims that prompted a threatening visit to Trujillo by the British warship H.M.S. Plumper in October 1849.[18]

[16] Concerning Welsh's background and the origins of his dispute with Carmichael, see Naylor (1989, 164, 191-192, 270 fn. 18).

[17] Concerning Carmichael's facilities at Limas, I rely upon Carmichael's own description of them in John Carmichael, Liverpool, to Earl of Clarendon [Foreign Office], 26 May 1856, PRO, FO 39/30 26973.

[18] Naylor (1989, 164, 191-192). Concerning Carmichael's claim, see John Carmichael, Liverpool, to the Earl of Malmesbury [Foreign Office], 12 May 1852; Foreign Office to

Such gestures of support from the British government brought Carmichael a few undisturbed years on the Román River, and allowed him to grow into one of the principal mahogany importers of Liverpool. As was mentioned earlier, by 1850 timber had for some time been among the principal imports of Liverpool, and mahogany was an important, lucrative niche in that trade. Though by weight mahogany accounted for only four percent of timber imports through Liverpool in 1850 (the bulk of the rest of those imports represented by Canadian and Baltic oak, pine, fir, planks and staves, and dyewood), mahogany accounted for about 19 percent of the value those timber imports.[19] It seems that all of the leading timber merchants of Liverpool concerned themselves with North American timber and not at all with mahogany from the tropics, leaving smaller merchants like Carmichael to play major roles in that niche.[20] As lucrative as that niche was, Carmichael evidently thought himself destined for still greater undertakings.

John Carmichael, 1 June 1852; John Carmichael to the Earl of Malmesbury, 11 June 1852; and John Carmichael to same, 19 August; all from PRO, FO 39/30, 26973. Concerning the visit of the H.M.S. Plumper, sent to extract prompt payment of the claim, see Commander of H.M.S. Plumper to the Commandant of Trujillo, 3 October 1849, enclosed with U.S. Consul Follin's 4 December 1849 despatch to Washington, NA, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Omoa, Microform T-477, roll 2. Relying on still other reports of the visit of the Plumper to Trujillo, Naylor observed that the commander of the Plumper "was not optimistic about ending Honduran interference in the logging activities of Belize companies operating under Mosquito authority and he expected that two companies of Belize troops would eventually have to be stationed on the Román River to protect the frontier".

[19] Calculated from "Estimated value of imports into London, Liverpool, and Hull in 1850" in Baines (1852, 8).

[20] The observation concerning the leading timber merchants comes from Williams (1966, 109-110). One notes also that in Williams' list of the top twenty timber importers in 1850, while many did import dyewood, none imported mahogany. Specifically within the mahogany trade, Honduran mahogany itself was a small niche, accounting for less than 20 percent of mahogany imports. Honduran mahogany accounted for an average of 20 percent of mahogany imports (by number of logs imported) to Liverpool between 1844 and 1848, but only an average of 13 percent in the following four years. The rest of that trade consisted of Dominican, Haitian and Cuban mahogany. Calculated from figures provided in Baines (1852, 8). It is unfortunately not possible to be more precise about Carmichael's rank among mahogany importers to Liverpool. While we have figures for Carmichael's mahogany imports for 1849, 1850 and 1851, he imported to both Liverpool and London, and the available figures are not broken down by port of entry. However if Carmichael had imported all of his mahogany through Liverpool in 1849, for example, that would have accounted for virtually all Honduran mahogany imported that year.

Carmichael and the Inter-Oceanic Canal

On the Román River Carmichael lent his business interests to the furtherance of the strategic interests of Great Britain. Elsewhere in Central America, Hispanic nations were even then seeking to advance their own national and strategic interests by allying themselves with the private interests of foreign entrepreneurs like Carmichael, and again Carmichael would lend his hand.

Among the many difficult, unresolved issues left by the break-up of the Central American Federation was the proper boundary between Nicaragua and Costa Rica. The matter became all the more pressing as speculation concerning a possible inter-oceanic route along the San Juan River increased in the 1840s. Before 1848 Carmichael himself was speculating upon the development of such a route, developing plans to use a steamship he owned to provide service up the San Juan River from its Caribbean terminus at San Juan, later renamed Greytown.[21]

By the late 1840s Costa Rica had come to perceive as vital, for its coffee exports and to secure its northern borders against Nicaraguan claims, that it establish a viable route from San José and the interior to the Atlantic. The most feasible route, departing from San José, would take one north by road to the Sarapiquí River, down the Sarapiquí to its juncture with the San Juan River, and thence to the port of San Juan Norte, or, as it was renamed, Greytown. In this plan, and as a counterweight to Nicaragua, Costa Rica considered Great Britain to be its natural ally. Nicaragua refused to recognize Costa Rican claims to territory along the San Juan, and refused to acknowledge the existence or legitimacy of a Mosquito territory along its Atlantic coast. With its recent victory over Mexico, the United States would quickly turn its attention still further southward, most reasoned, to challenge British designs (real or imaginary) upon future canal routes, and the United States did quickly find in Nicaragua its most active ally in that endeavor.

With tensions increasing between Nicaragua and Costa Rica, both nations sent representatives to Great Britain to court British support for their claims. Costa Rica sent Felipe Molina empowered as *Primer Ministro Plenipotenciario* with instructions, in addition to approaching British

[21] But in 1848 Carmichael sold the steamer, and as Naylor noted, there is no evidence that Carmichael actually ever put the ship in service on the San Juan River (Naylor, 1989, 175).

authorities directly, to negotiate a contract with a British firm to construct the Sarapiquí road, to create a canal along suitable portions of the proposed Trans-isthmian route, and to bring European colonists to settle in territory disputed with Nicaragua. The concession Molina was to negotiate had as its purpose not only the actual realization of those projects, but more immediately, the creation of a set of private British interests in the Costa Rican position, which private interests might then bring pressure to bear (through a public media campaign and through direct lobbying) upon the British government to support the Costa Rican claims. Perhaps even a British protectorate over Costa Rica could thus be achieved.[22]

Evidently Molina had no luck interesting any major British firms in the Costa Rican project, but he was able to attract a smaller concern, the partnership of George Tyler and John Carmichael, and the latter signed a contract for the project in July 1849. Tyler was apparently the one who could better raise the money, while Carmichael knew the area and also had good contacts in the Foreign Office. (And it was, after all, the Costa Rican intention not only to have the road, canal and colonists, but also to involve the British government in the defense of Costa Rican interests.)[23]

The Costa Rican contract with Carmichael and Tyler committed the latter to undertake works necessary to improve navigation on the San Juan River, to build a canal from the Pacific Ocean to the Sapoá River (which when completed would allow ship traffic up the San Juan to exit to the Pacific), to build a road from San José to the Sarapiquí, and to bring colonists to settle in the border area. For that, Carmichael and Tyler would receive a swath of land three leagues wide along the San Juan River and Lake Nicaragua, all profits on use of the inter-oceanic route for 50 years, free use of all minerals found in the land granted (except for gold and silver, on which the concessionaires would have to pay a small tax), free importation of equipment necessary for completion of the project, further lands here and there along the road from San José to Sarapiquí,

[22] Obregón Quesada (1993, 88-96). An example of how such public financial interest could be translated into political pressure on British policy had already been well established by the many committees of Latin American bondholders established in England in the 1830s and 1840s. See, for example, Dawson (1990).

[23] Obregón Quesada (1993, 97-99). That Carmichael had good contacts in the Foreign Office is indicated by W.D. Christie, King's House, Jamaica, to Colonel Fancourt, Belize, 22 July 1848, AB, r. 27. In his letter Christie observed that "He [Carmichael] was introduced to me by a private note from Lord Eddisbury, the Foreign Under Secretary, who spoke of him as a person of the highest respectability. He receives much attention at the Foreign Office".

the right to collect the tolls or taxes on coffee exports and imported merchandise carried over that road or along the navigable route they created. Finally, they would be granted quarter million acres of *terrenos baldíos* (barren lands) in the border area with Nicaragua, and another 150 000 acres along the border with Nueva Granada, for the settlement of the colonists attracted by the company. Tyler and Carmichael would administer the lands granted along the canal route, and they would have the responsibility for preventing Nicaraguan encroachment upon Costa Rican territory, though Costa Rica would appoint a governor for the semi-autonomous territory thus created (Obregón Quesada, 1993, 97-98).

Tyler and Carmichael at the same time signed a contract to provide a loan to the Costa Rican government for 200 000 pound sterling (Obregón Quesada, 1993, 98-99; Sáenz Carbonell, 1995, 142).

With the contract in hand, Molina's next move was going to be to seek from the British Foreign Secretary the extension of a British protectorate over Costa Rica (Obregón Quesada, 1993, 100). However, for reasons that remain obscure to the most serious student of this affair, Obregón Quesada, despite Molina's repeated warnings that time was of the essence, the Costa Rican congress dragged its feet in amending and approving the Tyler-Carmichael concession. By the time the Congress ratified any part of the concession (that part for the Sarapiquí road only, in June 1850), Nicaragua had outmaneuvered Costa Rica, and the course of British policy in Central America had taken a decisive turn. Nicaragua signed a canal contract with the American Vanderbilt firm, granting them land on both sides of the San Juan River (i.e. ignoring the Costa Rican claim to the south bank) and enlisting the active support of the United States in defense of that contract. Shortly afterwards, Great Britain and the United States signed the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty. Among the key provisions of that treaty were provisions pledging the neutrality of the inter-oceanic route across Central America and committing the two powers to support whatever company first began canal construction. By the time the Costa Rican congress approved part of the Tyler-Carmichael concession, the Vanderbilt firm had not yet won the right to insist upon such international support. If Tyler and Carmichael could move quickly, they might beat out Vanderbilt. But the fact that the Costa Rican congress had only approved the road part of the concession led Tyler and Carmichael to delay renewing their pledge to develop the inter-oceanic route. By October 1851 the Tyler-Carmichael concession was dead. The Costa Rican congress had still not ratified the canal provisions of

that concession, and it had in the meantime granted to an American firm the rights to build the Sarapiquí road (Obregón Quesada, 1993, 108-116, 139-140).

Back to Basics

Even as his canal concession languished and died, Carmichael pursued his other Central American ventures with vigor. He was operating unmolested on the north coast of Honduras, making a profit of some 3 500 pounds per year on the mahogany shipped out. While taking mahogany out, he was shipping back to Belize and Central America British manufactures, earning, he claimed, some 10 000 dollars per year.[24] Carmichael also had associates directing logwood cutting northeast of Bacalar, in Mexican territory controlled by rebel Maya Indians. (That operation was directed from British Honduras by Archibald Montgomery, the man whom Carmichael bought out of the Román River.)[25] And Carmichael was extending credit to probably a wide range of individuals in British Honduras (as exporters of British manufacturers often did), the most significant of whom (given later events) was John Hume Blake. With loans from Carmichael, Blake bought the Goshen estate near Corozal in the Northern District of British Honduras, the key to his successful promotion of commercial agriculture in that area (Cal, 1984, 41-42).

Carmichael was enjoying some support of his home government and diplomats in the defense of his Central American interests. The powerful and experienced British Consul General in Central America, Frederick Chatfield, indirectly supported Carmichael's tranquil exploitation of Honduran forests. In December 1850, for example, he had occasion to inform the Minister of Foreign Relations of Honduras that both sides of the Román River were Mosquito territory, and he asked renewed assurances that Honduras would not molest British loggers there. Chatfield even claimed that Welsh, Carmichael's rival on the West Bank of the

[24] The figures are Carmichael's, provided for 1850-1853, in John Carmichael, Liverpool, to Earl of Clarendon [Foreign Office], 26 May 1856, PRO, FO 39/30, 26973.

[25] That work was pursued by Antonio Mathé and Company, a front for Carmichael as explained above. Antonio Mathé and Company, and James McDonald, Belize, to Superintendent of British Honduras, 11 February 1850, AB, r. 33. Yucatecan troops operating in the area burned the logwood camps in 1850, provoking this protest from Mathé and Company and McDonald.

Román River, should not be paying Honduras for the logs he cut. There were two reasons for that, it seems. First, Welsh was logging at least partially in Mosquito territory. Secondly, back in 1840 Honduras had pledged to devote part of the proceeds from such logging concessions to the long-overdue redemption of bonds owned by British investors. Since Welsh, recently at least, had put in Chatfield's hands the funds Welsh owed Honduras, Chatfield was thereafter going to withhold those payments from Honduras until Honduras engaged in satisfactory discussions of the boundary matter.[26]

Meanwhile Chatfield was also working on getting Carmichael compensation for his prior difficulties with Honduran and Central American soldiers, i.e. the Honduran action on the Román in 1847. In December 1848 Chatfield received instructions to negotiate the claim for Carmichael, and he subsequently received Honduran recognition of the claim and an agreement to pay Carmichael some forty-seven thousand dollars. That did not end the matter. Three years later neither Carmichael nor any of the other claimants had received any money, and Chatfield had again to negotiate a Honduran payment. To incline Honduras in that direction, a British warship visited Trujillo in January 1852. By April 1852 the Hondurans formally agreed to pay a total of eighty-thousand dollars (of which Carmichael figured that with unpaid principal and six percent interest since the last day of 1848, $50 000 of that ought to be his). Honduras would pay the sum off by annually depositing the sum of $12 000 with the House of Camoyano & Company in Belize City, paying five percent interest per year from April 1852 on the unpaid balance.[27]

Carmichael Expelled from the Román River

When in 1851 the British consul to (and effective ruler of) the Mosquito territory tried to coax Welsh, Carmichael's logging rival on the Román,

[26] Frederick Chatfield, British Legation, Guatemala, to Minister of Foreign Relations of Honduras, Comayagua, 6 December 1850, found in NA, Despatches from U.S. Consuls to Omoa, Microform T-477, roll 2.

[27] John Carmichael, Liverpool, to the Earl of Malmesbury [Foreign Office], 12 May 1852; Draft, Foreign Office to John Carmichael, 1 June 1852; John Carmichael to the Earl of Malmesbury [Foreign Office], 11 June 1852; Same to Same, 19 August 1852, all from PRO, FO 39 / 30 26973. Carmichael apparently never was able to collect much of the amount awarded. Concerning the despatching of the warship to Trujillo, see Naylor, 1989, 192.

to renounce his agreements with Honduras and instead pay concession fees to the Mosquito government, Welsh responded that it would be suicidal for him to do so. Events soon proved him right. Though Chatfield had made progress in forcing Honduran recognition of Carmichael's grievances, when Chatfield's like-minded superior (Foreign Secretary Palmerston) fell from power in London and Chatfield himself was recalled from Central America, Carmichael's position grew dangerously tenuous. Meanwhile the U.S. Consul to Omoa was encouraging the Hondurans to take action against the British loggers (he was himself a rival logger on the north coast of Honduras), and the consul kept up a stream of communications to Washington warning of sinister British designs on that coast (Naylor, 1989, 191-92).

Seizing the moment of weakness, the Honduran Commandant of Trujillo led a force of about 65 soldiers to occupy Carmichael's port at Limas on the 10th of November 1852. In a letter to Carmichael and Company (formerly Mathé and Company, but always Carmichael in reality) the commandant demanded that they: 1) abandon their works on the Román River. 2) Deliver to Welsh trees felled in areas belonging to the Welsh concession. 3) Pay Honduras for trees felled in areas outside of the Welsh concession. The commandant also apparently demanded that the British flag be lowered from Carmichael's port at Limas. The British vice consul in Limas, George Pithketly, had until that moment been in charge of Carmichael's interests there, but to salvage his own position on the coast he quit the job. Carmichael's new man, Robert Hume, responded boldly to the commandant. Hume declared that Carmichael and Company had been working on the east bank of the Román unmolested for twenty years, that those were Mosquito lands, and that to accede to the Honduran order would be to "interfere with the rights of the Mosquito nation under British protection..." So Hume declined to comply and asked the commandant not to take any further action until he could communicate with Belize and until the commandant might receive further instructions from his own government.[28]

The Hondurans ignored Hume's protests. They lowered the British ensign from Limas on the 14th of November and hoisted the flag of the Central American Federation in its place. According to some accounts

[28] George Pithketly, Limas Town, Mosquito, to Mariano Álvarez, Comandant of Trujillo, 13 November 1852; and Robert Hume, for John Carmichael & Co., Limas, to Mariano Álvarez, Comandante of Trujillo, 13 November 1852, among NA, Despatches from U.S. Consuls to Omoa, Microform T-477, roll 2.

the Hondurans proceeded to round up Carmichael's workers and march them away, but not before forcing Carmichael's agents to pay the Honduran commander a sum calculated to cover the unpaid wages of those workers, as well as the value of trees felled that season and unpaid duties for goods Carmichael had imported into Limas. According to Hume, laborers fled at the first rumors of the approach of soldiers, some of the laborers pausing to plunder one of Carmichael's outlying mahogany camps. Adding insult to injury, it seems, the Commandant of Trujillo successfully induced Carmichael's former manager, Pithketly, to accept Honduran sovereignty in that area, Pithketly agreeing thereafter to pay Honduras for trees he felled at his own works on the Poyais River, further east still than the Román.[29]

Just days after the Honduran occupation of Limas, the Superintendent of British Honduras wrote to the Commandant of Trujillo calling upon him to take no further action against British interests there while negotiations were in progress concerning the western boundaries of the Mosquito Territory.[30] The Commandant never responded to the Superintendent's note, and his soldiers continued in occupation of Limas until the following February. In mid February 1853, the British warship *Devastation* appeared off Trujillo. The British commander demanded the immediate withdrawal of Honduran troops from lands east of the Román River, and he demanded written guarantees that Honduras would not again molest English woodcutters operating there. Faced with the imminent destruction of Trujillo, the Hondurans withdrew. Meanwhile Carmichael secured a promise from the new Foreign Secretary of Great Britain that the government would act quickly to protect his interests. And, naturally, Carmichael lodged a new claim against the government of Honduras for damages sustained —the value of trees he had felled but could not export, lost advances to laborers who did not return, and other

[29] Robert Hume, Limas, 15 November 1852; George Pithketly, Limas, to Mariano Álvarez, 16 November 1852; both from NA, Despatches from U.S. Consuls to Omoa, Microform T-477, roll 2. Pithketly made a very quick, even craven, submission. On 12 November he had told the Commandant of Trujillo that he would not lower the British flag over Limas and would protest should the Commandant order any of his soldiers to do so. By 16 November Pithketly could pledge, however, that "the flag of Central America which you have left with me shall be respected to the uttermost of my power —should any person dare take [it] from my flag staff I will immediately inform you". Pithketly to Commandant of Trujillo, 12 November and 16 November 1852, with NA, Despatches from U.S. Consuls to Omoa, Microform T-477, roll 2.

[30] P.E. Wodehouse, Belize, to Commandant of Trujillo, 24 November 1852, AB, r. 40.

business losses stemming from the flight of much of the population around Limas. Then Carmichael resumed logging on the Román River.[31]

But Honduras was not done with Carmichael. One night in June of 1853 a group of one to two dozen men invaded Limas and proceeded directly to kill the two Mosquito constables there (Jamaicans, actually, brought in two years earlier to serve as such). They tried to kill the Mosquito Agent, too, but he narrowly escaped into the forest. The invaders then plundered Carmichael's store. Either the same party, or another acting concurrently, scoured Carmichael's mahogany works, killing or robbing Carmichael's cattle (some seven hundred head), dispersing his workers, and capturing two of his managers. (Oddly, the latter were soon released unharmed.) Though the invaders left no proof of their identity, no one doubted they had been sent or encouraged by the Commandant of Trujillo.[32]

A Belizean commission later appointed to investigate Carmichael's losses on the Román and Limas Rivers estimated those losses (from the November 1852 and July 1853 raids) to total some fifty-four thousand dollars. Carmichael himself estimated the losses to total much more —some twenty-five to thirty thousand pounds sterling.[33] Naturally

[31] Colin Campbell, Commander, H.M.S. Devastation, to the Commandant of Trujillo, 19 February 1853, with NA, Despatches from U.S. Consuls to Omoa, Microform T-477, roll 2. John Carmichael, Liverpool, to Earl of Clarendon [Foreign Office], 22 September 1853; Foreign Office to John Carmichael, 29 September 1853, PRO, FO 39/30 26973.

[32] The most complete description of the invasion is M. Daly, Mosquito Government Agent at Limas, Belize, to James Green, Consul, Woburn, 30 July 1853; see also James Green, Consul, Woburn, to Earl of Clarendon, 13 September 1853; John Carmichael and Antonio Mathé, Belize, to Henry Grant Foote, H.B.M. Acting Agent and Consul, Grey Town, Mosquito, 23 July 1853; all from PRO, FO 39/30 26973. That the raid on Limas was an official Honduran acts appears to have later been confirmed by the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Honduras, even as he retracted that admission: "In my former communication I stated that according to information obtained on this affair, the Undersigned [the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Honduras] had been given to understand that in consequence of an order from his Government, the establishment formed on the banks of the River Limas by Mr. Carmichael was made to disappear, but that order has not been found in the Archives although it has been carefully sought for, so that it remains in doubt to the Undersigned whether that act was executed in virtue of superior Authority or whether it was an isolated act, the responsibility of which ought to weigh upon the perpetrators of it" (José María Rojas, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Honduras, Comayagua, to British Chargé d'Affaires in Central America, 6 December 1856, PRO, FO 39/31 26973).

[33] J.W. Travis, Henry Schurer, P. Toledo, Belize, 10 March 1856, AB, r. 26. John Carmichael and Antonio Mathé, Belize, to Henry Grant Foote, Acting Agent and Consul, Grey Town, Mosquito, 23 July 1853, PRO, FO 39/30 26973.

Carmichael filed yet another claim against the government of Honduras, but he could no longer ignore the obvious. Nobody would provide him with effective protection against the Hondurans. So Carmichael sold his operation to his former manager and British Vice Consul to Mosquitia, Pithketly, who along with other colleagues of Carmichael on that coast recognized the Honduran right to grant them concessions and collect payments from them for the same. Shortly afterward, Great Britain signed a treaty with Honduras among the provisions of which was recognition that the disputed territory in fact belonged to Honduras.[34]

Caught between a hostile Honduras and an indifferent Great Britain, Carmichael railed against both and, initially at least, claimed damages from both. His disillusionment with his own government was bitter:

> Whilst for years we have alone upheld the rights of the Mosquito King to Limas and adjacent coast as far as Ramon River, whilst their only source of revenues has been derived on that coast from our operations and we have the assurances again and again given verbally and in writing by both the British and Mosquito Governments that protection would be afforded us, we find ourselves at this day at the mercy of any small band of Intruders whom the neighboring state of Honduras may send into Limas to rob and murder either in an official or private capacity![35]

What was more, Carmichael was convinced (and perhaps with good reason) that the Hondurans had attacked inspired by well founded rumors that the British were even then planning to renounce or negotiate away their tenuous claim to that part of so-called Mosquito territory.[36] The British government could do much to repair the situation by promptly negotiating a favorable and definitive settlement of the boundaries of Mosquito Territory, Carmichael suggested, still evidently hoping to cajole and shame his home officials into favorable action on his

[34] Naylor (1989, 192). John Carmichael, Liverpool, to Earl of Clarendon, 26 May 1856; Same to Same, 17 March 1857; both from PRO, FO 39/31 26973. The treaty apparently went unratified, but it significantly complicated Carmichael's efforts to recover damages.

[35] John Carmichael and Antonio Mathé, to Henry Grant Foote, Acting Agent and Consul, Gray Town, Mosquito, 23 July 1853, PRO, FO 39/30 26973.

[36] John Carmichael, Liverpool, to Earl of Clarendon, 22 September 1853, PRO, FO 39/30, 26973.

behalf. But that old game on the Mosquito Coast (described so well by Naylor) had been played out.[37]

Carmichael did not immediately abandon his aspirations for fortune in Honduras. He signed a contract in July 1857 with the Honduran government to cut mahogany in Honduran territory. Two months later he made a still better deal. Pursuing his claim against the Honduran government for damages suffered in the November 1852 raid on Limas, Carmichael had his agent negotiate an agreement with the President and Foreign Minister of Honduras under which Carmichael would receive Honduran permission to cut mahogany between the Lagoon of Trujillo and the River Plantain for twenty years; Carmichael's vessels would be exempt from usual tonnage duties, and merchandise that Carmichael imported in connection with his mahogany works would be exempt of duties as well. Carmichael would drop his claim for damages stemming from 1852, and he would forego payments still due him from his previous claims against the Honduran government (calculated at some 40 000 dollars). On top of that Carmichael would pay the Honduran government 10 000 dollars. The Honduran government would see to the removal of all people then cutting mahogany in the area ceded to Carmichael, except for those operating under valid contracts with the Honduran government (which included Welsh, still logging away on the Román River). Soon after the deal was struck, however, it was rejected by the Honduran Legislature. Carmichael and those favorable to Carmichael's interests renewed their futile calls for Great Britain to use force to compel the Hondurans to compensate Carmichael for his troubles in their neighborhood.[38]

A storm soon to strike in both hemispheres, however, would permanently dislodge Carmichael from the Honduran morass and deposit him in a new, no less troubled scene —northern British Honduras.

The Financial Panic of 1857-1858

Even as Carmichael negotiated to continue logging on the north coast of Honduras, he successfully bid to log crown land in the Orange Walk

[37] Carmichael's call for a settlement, and the curt official response that it was not to be expected are found in Carmichael's 22 September 1853 communication to the Earl of Clarendon, and the Foreign Office's 29 September 1853 reply, both in PRO, FO, 39/30, 26973

[38] Edward Hall, British Consulate, Comayagua, to Earl of Clarendon, 30 September 1857; Charles Wyke, British Legation, Guatemala, to Earl of Clarendon, 28 October 1857;

district of British Honduras, under the partnership or guise of Carmichael, Vidal, & Company. That latter move put him at sharp odds with the major landowner and logger in British Honduras, James Hyde and Company, as Hyde claimed that Carmichael was intruding upon Hyde's own lease of crown land. Upon further investigation, Hyde determined that the crown land in question was not crown land at all, but, rather, his own private property. So Hyde sued Carmichael for trespass in the courts of Belize City. The case had been going on for three weeks already and its results were awaited as being of "immense importance" to the settlement (effecting as it might the leasing of crown land in much of the rest of the territory), when the financial world of Europe and the Americas plunged deeply into panic and ruin, with consequences in short order for Hyde, Carmichael, and all the other interests, major and minor, in British Honduras.[39]

The conditions which led to the financial panic of 1857-1858 had been brewing for much of the decade, and are far beyond the purview of this paper to review.[40] Worth noting here, however, is that the same conditions that contributed to the panic of 1857-1858 were conditions that had so greatly facilitated the expansion of international trade during the preceding decade. Carmichael was one of the countless beneficiaries, and one of the equally countless victims, of the economic cycle. The discovery of gold in California and Australia in 1848 and 1851, respectively, had produced substantial increases in the gold stocks of the western world. Those increases contributed to tremendous expansion in international trade and investments by spurring the expansion of credit and the concomitant means for settling international payments. Over the decade, however, much of that increase in circulating coin was drained eastward, to pay for troops fighting in the Crimea, to pay for imports from China and India, to fund a frenzy of railroad construction in south Asia, and more. Credit did not contract, accordingly, however. It continued to grow and grow, facilitating the infinite minor transactions of domestic exchange and international trade, but weakening at the same time the very foundations of that economy.

John Carmichael, Liverpool, to Earl of Malmesbury 7 September 1858; Charles Wyke, British Legation, Guatemala, to Earl of Malmesbury, 30 September 1858, all from FO 39/31, 26973.

[39] Concerning Hyde suing Carmichael, I only have "News from Honduras, Our Belize Correspondence, 11 October 1857", *The New York Herald*, 7 November 1857.

[40] See, Van Vleck (1967), Evans (1860), Gibbons (1858).

Gibbons in his fascinating work, *The Banks of New York*, succinctly portrayed the firm grip of excessive credit (much of it ill-secured) upon the United States economy from the household to the high financier.

> Commerce, in its broadest sense, is carried on by promissory notes. The multiplication of this form of credit is beyond all control. It loads every department of trade, from pins and needles up to cargoes on grain and cotton. It represents ships, railroads, and manufactories, as well as public and private contracts. The 'pass-book' of the housekeeper is balanced by a note at three or six months. The retailer purchases goods of the jobber, and gives his note in settlement. The jobber gives notes to the wholesale merchant and he in turn to the manufacturer or producer. The manufacturer gives notes for the raw material. The factor is already under acceptance to the grower, and the grower's notes are given to the banks long before his 'fields are white unto harvest.' The sugar that reaches our wharves from Havana or New Orleans has two or three sets of notes predicated on it before the first hogshead is discharged from the vessel; and it continues to accumulate notes as it passes through the hands of the refiner into those of the grocer. Even after it has been swallowed in confections, its notes are still floating, unliquidated, in the market. The market carries millions of notes for what is already consumed, and millions more for what is not yet sprouted in the furrow [Gibbons, 1858, 214].

While British consumers, merchants, shippers, manufacturers and the like, were surely somewhat less addicted to credit and speculation than their unruly American counterparts, the trends in Great Britain were similarly alarming.[41]

"The bank is the principal channel of liquidation of all this mass of notes," Gibbons went on to note. And if the banks stumble, the whole edifice falls. Stumble, the banks did. An increase in interest rates in England (to combat France's efforts to raid its species stocks), poor harvests in the western United States, isolated business closings in the United States, were, in hindsight, early harbingers in 1857 of the disaster that

[41] Evans (1860, 30), "Predictions had been... expressed that the trade of the country was making too rapid a progress, and that the extravagance of the day would lead to a collapse, either financial or commercial, which could not fail to entail serious consequences; but it was scarcely perceived that the deep-rooted system of fictitious credit had so thoroughly expanded through all branches of business, as to create that situation of things which was exposed by the subsequent events..."

approached. The collapse of an Ohio bank in late August (all its capital had been embezzled), startled New York bankers, however, and produced a run among them. Not a run *on* the banks by worried depositors seeking their meager funds, but, as Gibbons put it, a run by the worried banks on the people who owed them money. New York banks, and banks elsewhere in the country, began calling in loans to reduce their own risk should depositors come knocking looking for payments in species. The contraction of credit was sudden, severe and widespread, and it produced ruin among banks and businesses throughout the country, as well as plummeting prices for commodities, land, and securities (all overvalued anyway from years of speculation). Then the run on their deposits that the banks had feared occurred. By October there was hardly a bank left open in the entire United States and hundreds of thousands of workers displaced from ruined factories and firms roamed the streets of American cities.

Great Britain could not but suffer from the panic in America. British capital was intimately committed to the trade with America and to America's trade with the rest of the world. British investors, large and small, had put vast sums into American securities, bonds and speculative schemes and British merchants, manufacturers, and the like were naturally sensitive to the fall in commodity prices that the American crisis produced.[42] British failures related to the American crisis commenced in October, and accelerated after the failure of the Liverpool Borough Bank in November. In quick succession failed banks and import houses, iron operations, textile mills, and so on, through British commerce and industry.

Carmichael and his associates in the Honduran trade, whether from London or Liverpool, or in British Honduras proper, kept their heads above water for a while, it seems. The crisis in the United States and Great Britain (and much of northern Europe) had largely passed by February 1858. Largely, but not entirely. In August of that year the London house of Hyde, Hodge and Company failed.[43] Hyde, Hodge and Company were major mahogany importers. When they closed their doors they still had some 2.9 million feet of mahogany en route to Great Britain. In the meantime, however, accountants established that the firm

[42] An excellent source on the intimate relations between British capital and American commerce is Jenks (1927).

[43] *The Times of London*, 4 August 1858, p. 6, and 5 August 1858.

had only some 102 thousand pounds in assets (credits due it, the value of land holdings) and 247 thousand pounds of liabilities. Among the assets of the company were some one million acres of freehold land in British Honduras. Apparently, however, the company was involved in more than mahogany cutting and importing, and land holding and development, and as one report had it, they had squandered much capital in speculative schemes to transport Asian laborers, and in African adventures of nature unknown.[44]

The collapse of Hyde, Hodge and Company took with it the allied Belizean firm of James Hyde and Company. The Hyde's were long-time mahogany cutters and landowners in British Honduras, who through their alliance with Hodge in London were able to preserve and extend their interests there, while others from time to time fell to the wayside.[45] Like so many others in the 1850s, it seems, Hyde branched out beyond the base of his prosperity to engage in potentially lucrative speculation with other people's money. According to the Belize correspondent of *The New York Herald*, the fall of James Hyde and Company produced disaster and distress for many people in British Honduras.

> [The] firm of James Hyde & Co. has been for some years past receiving on interest the moneys of parties here who had money to put at interest. In nearly every case these sums of money so deposited comprise the all of the depositors, who, if they are not paid, will be ruined. They are in many instances widows, children, maids and old people who are now reduced to beggary...

[44] The statement of accountants concerning Hyde, Hodge and Company at the time of their closing is contained in Evans (1860: ccxxvii-ccxxix). That Hyde, Hodge and Company had lost much money in other speculative schemes, *The New York Herald*, 13 December 1858, p. 8. Concerning Hyde, Hodge and Company's involvement in the recruit and transport, to British Guiana and Trinidad, of indentured Chinese laborers, see documents in British House of Commons, 1971a and 1971b. High mortality among the indentured laborers plagued most of the several voyages staged by Hyde and Hodge. Such mortality would have entailed financial loss for the company, since in China the agent of the company had advanced money to would-be laborers who thereupon signed a contract to have the advance deducted from their pay in Guyana, for example. It appears that after 1854 Hyde and Hodge would have had no further occasion to transport laborers, as none arrived in British Guiana or Trinidad from that time until after 1858, the year the company went bankrupt. (Concerning the latter, see Look Lai (1993, 292, 296). The "African speculation" mentioned was perhaps the African Steamship Company, set up to transport mails, people and cargo up the recently explored Niger River.

[45] Concerning Hyde in British Honduras, see Bolland (1977, 183).

According to that critic, Hyde, acting as a kind of investment vehicle for the little people of British Honduras, had been sending the funds gleaned there to Hodge in London, who then sunk them into the kinds of speculative ventures already mentioned. With Hodge and Hyde in London, fell Hyde in British Honduras, and with it the small fortunes of many there.[46]

According to that same New York daily, Hyde's collapse brought down Carmichael (both in his guise as Carmichael and Company and the concern of Carmichael and Vidal). The causality is not entirely clear, though the newspaper asserted that Carmichael was a large creditor to Hyde, and when the latter could no longer (or simply refused) to pay his debts, Carmichael could not meet his obligations to others. The London firm of Archibald Montgomery (the same man who sold out to Carmichael on the Román River) was also a large creditor to Hyde and creditor, in turn, to Carmichael. Such were the sinews of credit and debt that when the squall came it would buffet firms and individuals from all sides.[47]

Montgomery ceased operations on 1 September, and by mid month the accountants for his creditors were picking over his books. Montgomery appears to have had two lines of business activity. One, he functioned as the London agent for John Carmichael, obtaining credits or goods for the latter, and retaining for himself the obligation to pay. His pursuit of fortune apparently also led him into an equally ill-fated partnership with Australians. Montgomery had started the year somewhat in the red, but in better times he might have turned it around. By August, however, in no small measure because of debts incurred on behalf of Carmichael (and with Carmichael's inability to pay); Montgomery's situation was hopeless. Accountants for his creditors determined that Montgomery had only forty thousand pounds in assets (some of dubious value) and eighty-one thousand pounds in debt. He passed directly to liquidation.

Carmichael and Company suspended operations very soon thereafter. Creditors met in Liverpool on 15 September to review the damage, their meeting described succinctly as "of a protracted nature". Accountants for the creditors were able to establish that Carmichael and Company had some 325 000 pounds in liabilities and only 217 000 pounds in

[46] *The New York Herald*, 13 December 1858, p. 8.

[47] That Hyde owed Carmichael and Montgomery comes from *The New York Herald*, 13 December 1858, p. 8; Montgomery's involvement with Carmichael is briefly documented in Evans (1860, ccxxix-ccxxxiii).

assets. The so-called assets included Carmichael's outstanding claim against the government of Honduras (valued at thirty thousand pounds), money owed Carmichael and Company by the company of Carmichael, Vidal and Company (this compartmentalizing of interests would save the day for Carmichael) and some six hundred shares in the Anglo-French Company. Apparently yet another vehicle through which Carmichael's interests in British Honduras was sheltered from liabilities incurred elsewhere and a vehicle for obtaining credit with essentially fictitious collateral.[48]

The affairs of Carmichael and Company did not proceed directly to liquidation, a fact that would work to Carmichael's significant advantage. It went, rather, into what they called "inspection". The group of creditors with interest in the estate decided that Carmichael should go as soon as possible to British Honduras to secure and liquidate assets there, after which, presumably those assets would be equitably distributed among claimants back in Great Britain. Carmichael received court approval to go, after pledging that even from afar he would "abide by any order the Court might make as to its [i.e. the permission] being recalled for any reason".[49] Carmichael sailed on the 16th of December for British Honduras, ostensibly to liquidate his affairs there, in fact to salvage what he could for himself and build his fortunes anew. He left behind his wife and nine children (and his mother-in-law living with them then, it seems), and was accompanied by one of his older sons, John Jr.[50] As far as I can tell, Carmichael did not again set foot in England until the final days of his life.

[48] It was not just to shield assets. At the time of his bankruptcy, Carmichael's shares in the Anglo-French Company were valued at 61 000 pounds. Over half Carmichael's shares in the Anglo-French Company apparently had been used as collateral for credit extended by others to Carmichael. The use of so-called securities as collateral for loans was a widespread practice, and one which in the estimate of analysts of the day contributed greatly to the failure of banks during the panic —i.e. when commodity and stock prices plummeted. Concerning the tally of the estate of Carmichael and Company, see Evans (1860, ccxxix-ccxxxi). As for my suspicion that the "Anglo-French Company" was a fictitious vehicle for guaranteeing credit, more on that below.

[49] *The Times of London*, 13 December 1858, p. 8.

[50] Though he figures prominently in his father's affairs in British Honduras, I cannot otherwise confirm that John Carmichael actually had a son, John Jr. It is possible that he was a son by another marriage or another woman, though I here make the reasonable assumption that the genealogical sources I have consulted simply have gaps, through one of which the son has slipped.

Carmichael Back in British Honduras

1858 had not been a good year for British Honduras either. The resurgent rebel Maya of Santa Cruz had been making striking gains against Yucatán since the sack of Tekax the year before. In February of 1858, after many years of trying, they recaptured Bacalar, vital port for trade and travel towards British Honduras. The owner of much land around Corozal in the Northern District —Blake— had tried to ransom dozens of prisoners whom the rebels had taken at Bacalar and whom they had not yet killed in the serial massacres of the hours and days following their triumph. But the rebel Maya slew their prisoners anyway, before an official British audience, and the news spread panic among the many hundreds of Yucatecan refugees who had settled in the Northern District since the first taking of Bacalar back in 1848.

The sack of Tekax, the fall of Bacalar, and an unsuccessful but still alarming assault upon Valladolid two months later sowed worry in Mérida as well. One of the four members of the Supreme Council of Yucatán confidentially sought through diplomatic channels to enlist the British actively in the war against the rebel Maya, in return for which the British could take Yucatecan territory as compensation. But British policy, especially after the signing of the Clayton-Bulwer treaty back in 1850, viewed territorial aggrandizement in Central America as out of the question, and the Yucatecans were so informed. Further, since the start of the Maya rebellion the British had asserted neutrality in the conflict —they would, that is, attempt to enjoy peaceable relations with all sides in that conflict, and allow all sides to engage in commerce with the British territory. Though that policy of neutrality was vigorously maligned by Mexico and Yucatán and at times sorely strained by the rebels Maya themselves, it would hold until the 1890s.[51]

[51] The offer was apparently communicated from only one of the four members of the Supreme Council of Yucatán, in a letter to the Mexican consul in Belize. The Mexican consul then broached the subject with the Superintendent of British Honduras. The latter, in his subsequent despatch to the governor in Jamaica, reported that he had told the Mexican consul that "I am afraid that I can hold out no hope of our departing from the position of neutrality we have assumed as regards the belligerent parties in Yucatán. Nor do I think the Government would view with favor any proposal for an augmentation of our territory in this part of the world." He also noted, for the benefit of the governor, that "the mere proposal has tempted the mahogany cutters who have for years looked with longing eyes at the magnificent forests on the left banks of the Hondo, and they urge that Mexico is breaking up". Frederick Seymour, Belize, to Governor Darling, Jamaica, 1 May 1858;

But 1858 was one of those years in which the policy was sorely strained. The British observed in the rebel Maya after the fall of Bacalar (and in their conduct in massacring prisoners despite British pleas to spare them) a dangerous arrogance towards British power that might propel the Maya to attack British Honduras itself. The superintendent of British Honduras sought permission from his superiors to invade Mexican territory, if necessary, to respond to Indian threats. Permission was denied. The best he could do under the circumstances was reinforce the garrisons of the Northern District and try thus to reassure the panicky residents of Corozal and environs.[52] The superintendent held out hope that the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz would be kept in check by a policy at once of friendly trade and the demonstration of force, noting to his superior that "it is only by maintaining the position to which we are entitled as a dependency of a Great Nation that we can look for immunity from annoyances if not attacks from our barbarous neighbors".[53]

Even as the rebel Maya menaced the northern frontier, the economy of the territory was in the doldrums, due in large measure to the collapse of James Hyde and Company and the loss of savings deposited with that firm. "Money is very scarce", the Belize correspondent of *The New York Herald* reported, "and there is no such thing as confidence; each seeks after what is due him and will take no denial. Credit is suspended, and worse, and more of it seems to be ahead". People who had deposited their money with Hyde and Company sought to have their claims addressed ahead of those of the England-based claimants against Hyde, Hodge and Company, and as of late 1858 it was still unclear how that matter would be resolved. Mahogany prices had also plummeted (as had the speculation-driven prices of many other commodities during the panic of 1857), and though much cut mahogany lay on the ground,

Antonio Mediz, Merida, to ?, 7 April 1858; Frederick Seymour, Belize, to T.H. Travis, Belize, 15 May 1858; all from PRO, WO 32/6201.

[52] Concerning the superintendent's request to invade Mexican territory, and the denial of permission, see Darling, Jamaica, to Sir Ed. Lytton, 26 July 1858, PRO, WO 32/6201.

[53] Frederick Seymour, Superintendent, Belize, to Governor Darling, Jamaica, 1 May 1858, PRO, WO 32/6201. See Bolland (1977, chapter 11), for an extensive discussion of the decline of the mahogany trade and of the mahogany firms in Belize. Bolland errs only in supposing, as he seems to, that the failure of mahogany houses was due to a decline in the price and availability of mahogany (e.g. p. 177). Firms can make profits even in declining markets. The mahogany houses failed in the late 1850s not because of commodity prices, but because of the credit crisis of 1857-1858.

the solvency of the logging companies was in doubt, too.[54] One bright spot, it seems, was an increase in commerce in the Northern District. Some of that increase reflected increased sales to the rebel Maya, with whom communications had improved since the fall of Bacalar.[55] Some was probably contraband trade with Yucatán, especially in sugar and rum, two products that had become the mainstay of the economy of the Northern District since James Blake acquired Corozal.[56]

Though Blake's properties were evidently producing well, he was squeezed for credit in the financial panic of 1857-1858, just like thousands

[54] *The New York Herald*, 18 November 1858, p. 3. Concerning the dispute over who should get their money first, those who had deposited with James Hyde & Co., or the creditors of Hyde, Hodge and Company, the *Herald* correspondent noted that "This is a very important question to this settlement, and it is a question of some consequence to the commercial world —as the firm of James Hyde & Co. are abundantly solvent, they having more than two and a half dollars in good property here for every dollar they owe, while the firm of Hyde, Hodge & Co. of London owe thirty dollars for every dollar of assets. The house here has been conducted fairly, honestly and prosperously, while that in London has been a stock (collie) and African speculation sustained by the cash deposits of the people in this town [Belize City]". In his otherwise admirable discussion of the economic downturn that British Honduras experienced from the 1850s on, Nigel Bolland unfortunately ignores the effect of the 1857-1858 panic (Bolland, 1977). He notes that the decline was due to the "establishment of direct connections between Britain and Guatemala [i.e. by-passing British Honduras], the disruption of trade with Yucatán following the *Guerra de las Castas,* and the depression in the mahogany trade... A decline in the mahogany trade, and in trade in general, affected these companies [merchants and mahogany companies] adversely; some reacted by closing altogether and others reacted by employing fewer laborers at lower wages" (p. 177). It was not, however, the decline in trade that caused companies like Hyde and Hodge to fail, but, rather, the credit crisis produced by the financial panic. Under those circumstances even profitable companies failed.

[55] "Trade is unusually active in the north, and Corozal is increasing rapidly in size. English messengers are received with much civility at Bacalar...", Frederick Seymour, Superintendent, Belize, to Governor Darling, Jamaica, 1 May 1858, PRO, WO 32/6201.

[56] The Belize correspondent for *The New York Herald* observed in October 1858 that "...large quantities of sugar and rum have been raised this year at the northward, some of which has been exported to New Orleans and to New York, but how it is done is a mystery to me, as it is worth $6 here, cash, which with freight, commissions and duty in the United States will exceed $8 per 100 lbs. And how it can be done, and made to pay, is the mystery". *The New York Herald*, 18 November 1858, p. 3. The answer would be, of course, that it was not being done —that shipments labeled for New Orleans or New York were actually destined for less distant, more needy markets. That the sugar and rum was entering Yucatán is suggested to me by an earlier observation made by the *Herald* correspondent, when he wrote in November 1857 that "Trade has in a measure revived in that quarter [Yucatán] with this town [Belize City]... some trade is now being done between this and Sisal, as also the islands of Cozumel, Mugeres and all along the shores of Yucatán". *The New York Herald*, 7 November 1857.

upon thousands of others throughout the western world. Carmichael had loaned him money to get started around Corozal, and the year before the financial panic hit Blake had mortgaged his properties there to Carmichael, Vidal and Company (presumably for an infusion of additional credit to expand or continue operations) (Cal, 1984, 42). With creditors calling in their debts all the way down the financial chain from London, Liverpool, New York and elsewhere, Blake came up short when the Anglo-French Company required he clear his $42 000 account with them (Cal, 1984, 42). Blake had to sell out to the Company.[57]

Carmichael arrived in British Honduras in early 1859 to salvage what he could from the failures of the year before.[58] During much of that year Carmichael, Hyde, Hodge and others scrambled to reassemble the broken pieces of their financial interests in British Honduras. In November 1859 the now bankrupt Anglo-French Company sold Blake's old Goshen and Pembroke estates to Carmichael for $52 000, requiring $17 500 down (Cal, 1984, 42). It was, to some extent, an incestuous transaction. Carmichael had lent money directly for the development of the estates back in the mid 1850s. Carmichael was a shareholder of the Anglo-French Company. And of the four associates of this shadowy concern that have been identified —John and Henry Bury, William Fletcher, and James Cazenove— at least two were fully familiar with the affairs of John Carmichael.[59] Henry Bury, of the Firm of Lloyd Entwiske Company, Bankers of Manchester, and William Fletcher, Liverpool manager of the Bank of England, were co-syndics managing the bankruptcy of John Carmichael.[60] In any event, while the Anglo-French Company held Blake's

[57] One report had it that Blake got $50 000 for his estates in the Northern District. Manuel Sierra de O'Reilly, Pantaleon Barrera, to Sr. prefecto político del departamento de Yucatán, 13 June 1864, published in *La Nueva Época*, 1 / 88, 24 June 1864, p. 1-3.

[58] Back on 15 September 1858 the *Times* of London reported that Carmichael would soon sail for Belize. But it was apparently not until mid-December that Carmichael received the necessary "certificate", or leave of the court and authorization to take actions regarding his insolvent estate, "the bankrupt undertaking to abide by any order the Court might make as to its being recalled for any reason". *Times* of London, 13 December 1858, p. 8.

[59] The four are named in Cal (1984, 42).

[60] Bury and Fletcher, together with John Myers, Director of the Royal Bank of Liverpool, and George Morgan, were syndics of the Carmichael bankruptcy. George Morgan, Liverpool, to Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs of the Government of Honduras, Comayagua, PRO, FO 39 / 31 26973. I suspect that the fourth associate, James Cazenove, was affiliated with the prominent London stockbrokers, Cazenove and Company (see Kynaston, 1991, 38).

lands in the Northern District, Carmichael was confident they were his, as he reportedly so informed the Superintendent of Belize six months prior to actually "purchasing" the properties from the Company.[61]

From the wreckage of the house of Hyde and Company, the British Honduras Company was formed. After months of foot-dragging on the liquidation of the properties of the bankrupt Hyde and Hodge, the Honduran assets were sold at auction in June 1859. A million acres of British Honduran real estate, along with warehouses, stores, cattle and ships went for $51 000 to a sub-group of the creditors of Hyde and Hodge, and John Hodge himself was appointed manager in the colony.[62] No doubt still other reorganizations were taking place in British Honduras, but with Carmichael's acquisition of large properties in and around Corozal, and with the creation of the British Honduras Company, the general shape of the power structure in the Northern District was largely set for years to come.

With the effects of the global financial panic receding, time came again to confront the situation on the northern border, where war between Maya rebels and the state of Yucatán was about to take a decisive and dangerous turn. Carmichael's long career as mediator between so-called "British interests" and the rebel Maya commenced almost immediately.

[61] Dumond (1997, 289, and 490, fn. 2) cites a communication from Carmichael to the Superintendent dated 16 March 1859 informing the latter, in Dumond's words, that he, Carmichael, "had taken possession of the properties of the ailing Mr. Blake in Corozal". Cal (1984, 42) meanwhile cited documents indicating that Carmichael did not purchase Goshen and Pembroke from the Anglo-French Company until November 1859. By March 1860 Carmichael was seeking to register his title to the land. Thanks to Ueli Hostettler for locating the registration of Carmichael's Corozal properties in AB, MP 840/22, "Stone removed from Mr. Schofield's land at Corozal, as to payment of claim for".

[62] (Bolland, 1977, 186). Hydge and Hodge had gone bankrupt back in August 1858, and by May 1859 creditors had received no payments (*The London Times*, 28 May 1859, p. 7). Shortly after the strangeness of that fact was reported in the newspapers, creditors received a token payment on their debt. (*The London Times*, 11 June 1859, p. 10). Report of the final auction came in the 28 June 1859 edition of *The London Times*, p. 6. Apparently not all creditors were satisfied with the final disposition of their debt, for John Hodge himself was arrested in British Honduras the following year. I do not know the final disposition of his case, though at the time of his arrest the *New York Herald* speculated that it would "go a great way to do away with the unfavorable opinions which have been against Mr. Hodge since the failure of Hyde, Hodge and Co. in 1858. It has created sympathy for him where, before he had the ill will and distrust of two thirds of this community". (*New York Herald*, 23 June 1860.)

Carmichael had not aspired to become a resident landlord in British Honduras. He had aimed at bigger prizes, and he had failed. Carmichael could only try to make the most of his financial misfortune by settling down to be the lord of the land around Corozal, close to his properties and far from his creditors in Great Britain. The prospects of rebuilding his fortunes there were dull, as were the prospects of British Honduras achieving prosperity. The outbreak of civil war in the United States hurt Belizean trade with that country, though some in Belize found a niche for themselves in the contraband trade between the Confederacy, Great Britain and New York.[63] A decline in demand for shipbuilding wood and a prolonged drop in the price mahogany could fetch in London or Liverpool depressed the timber industry of the colony.[64] As the prospects for prosperity from timber declined, some looked to the expansion of sugar cultivation in the Northern District as an engine and model for the development of the colony. That model was still shaky. Poor growing weather in 1861 left sugar planters with less product to sell, debts to creditors unpayable, and difficulty getting advances on the next year's crop.[65] And to expand sugar cultivation more labor was needed. The ranches and estates of the Northern District were stocked with refugees from the war to the north, many of whom came in the late 1840s, some after the fall of Bacalar in 1858. But there were no more refugees to be

[63] Eluding the Union blockade of southern ports, if they could, Belizean or confederate ships carried cotton from Texas, New Orleans, or Mobil to Belize, for reshipment to New York or London. In the reverse direction they carried armaments, presumably of British manufacture, for the confederacy. There is no evidence that Carmichael was involved in that trade, though he was related through the marriage of his oldest daughter to the Laird shipbuilders of Birkenhead, who built Confederate raiders. Concerning the Belize role in trade with the confederacy, see George Raymond, U.S. Consul, Belize, to Seward, Secretary of State, Washington, 26 February 1862; same to same, 25 August 1862; same to same, 26 November 1862; same to same 26 December 1862; Charles Leas, U.S. Commercial Agent, Belize, to Seward, Assistant Secretary of State; all from NA, Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Belize, T 334, Roll 1. Reports concerning the contraband trade were published as well in *The New York Herald* on 28 July 1862, 16 February 1863, and 14 May 1863.

[64] "Our Belize Correspondent, Belize, Honduras, 6 December 1861", *The New York Herald*, 4 January 1862, p. 5. "Our Belize Correspondent, 5 July 1862", *The New York Herald*, 28 July 1862, p. 8. "Belize Correspondent, 10 December 1862" and same writing 1 January 1863, both published in *The New York Herald*, 1 February 1863. Bolland (1977, chapter 11).

[65] "Our Belize Correspondent, Belize, Honduras, 6 December 1861", *The New York Herald*, 4 January 1862, p. 5.

expected from that quarter. Compliant laborers in significant numbers would have to come from somewhere else. Though a handful of British vessels had transported Chinese laborers to the sugar plantations of Guyana and Trinidad in 1857 and 1858, by the time the Belizean planters got around to seeking their lot, the British government shut down the controversial program, for the time being, at least. The hope that freed North American slaves (once there were many) would emigrate to British Honduras was a chimera.[66]

By early 1861 Carmichael owned some 40 to 50 square miles of land around Corozal, as well as much or the entire town itself. All that property was worth little or nothing to him, however, without people to rent houses and plots, without laborers to cultivate maize and sugar, and without customers to make purchases in the stores in Corozal. About 11 000 people lived thereabouts, 41 percent of the entire population of British Honduras. Almost two-thirds of them had been born on the Mexican side of the Yucatán Peninsula, and they had come seeking peace and security.[67] As long as the authorities and planters of the Northern District could provide that, they would stay and pay rents, incur debts, labor in the cane fields, and buy in the stores. If war menaced them again, they would leave. That simple fact guided Carmichael's concern with security issues and the rebel Maya. It was a hard lesson he had learned, to his loss, in Honduras. With persistence and agility he labored over the following years to keep that from happening to him again.

Even as timber and sugar faltered, security on the northern border worsened dramatically. In January 1860 the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz destroyed a large Yucatecan force that had invaded and temporarily seized control of the rebel capital of Noh Cah Santa Cruz. Within a few months the rebel Maya were operating in force near the border with British Honduras. Armed with fine weapons captured from the Yucatecans, they attacked Chichanhá, populated by Mayas who had already made peace with Yucatán and Campeche and they crossed the Río Hondo

[66] Bolland (1977, 142). "Our Belize Correspondent, 5 July 1862", *The New York Herald*, 28 July 1862, p.8. For annual statistics on the immigration, showing its distinct phases, see Look Lai (1993, 292, Table 23).

[67] Census of British Honduras, 1861. Robert Hume, Secretary to the Census Commission. The total population of Corozal and surrounding area given as 10 700, 62% of who were born in "Yucatán", 78% of who were Indian or mestizo. The estimate of Carmichael's total land holding in the area comes from T. Price, Acting Superintendent, Belize, to Governor Darling, Jamaica, Honduras Despatch No. 50, 1 May 1861, PRO, WO 32/6201.

to seize residents of the colony who owed them rent for land cultivated in corn on the northern side of the river. With the frontier in turmoil, colonial authorities contemplated moving the military garrison stationed in Corozal to a point further north, near the mouth of the Río Hondo. Rumors of that move alarmed residents of Corozal even more, as it would seem to leave their key settlement vulnerable to Indian attack from the west and northwest. At that juncture John Carmichael made what appears to have been his first foray into the domain of security and rebel relations. Writing on his own initiative, though citing the concerns of other principal citizens of Corozal, Carmichael argued for keeping the garrison in Corozal, a healthier site than the one being contemplated, where troops could be more easily watered and provisioned and more readily dispatched to various points along the frontier. Finally, Carmichael cited the preeminent need to reassure the residents of Corozal and environs that they would be safe from attack. As Carmichael explained it,

> Your Excellency is aware from your recent visit to that neighborhood, of the importance of the place, as the sugar growing District of this Colony that almost the whole population estimated at 4 000 gain their living by the cultivation of Sugar etc. and that this cultivation would be very much checked, unless the fears of the population were quieted. I can assure your Excellency that great alarm has already been manifested by the people at the contemplated removal of the Troops and I am apprehensive that should this movement be carried into effect a large portion of the inhabitants from the fear of Indians will withdraw to the serious injury of this very important branch of Industry of the Colony.[68]

Carmichael lobbied not only for the retention of the garrison, but he also offered to rent land at a very nominal price for the construction of new barracks in Corozal, so that the public plaza which the troops then occupied could be devoted to the other uses for which it was intended.

With the Yucatecans still reeling from the destruction of their expedition to Santa Cruz, the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz spent the next year and half-settling scores with others on the peninsula. In December 1860 they attacked another group of pacified rebels, this one in the Chenes, and took many prisoners, most of whom were executed shortly after. In March

[68] John Carmichael, Belize, Honduras, to Thomas Price, Superintendent, Belize, Honduras, 15 May 1860, PRO, FO 39/31 26973.

of 1861 they were back down on the Río Hondo. Again they crossed into British territory, this time seizing a few head of cattle they claimed belonged to them. In response to that latest disturbance, the Superintendent of British Honduras sent two officers and an escort to carry a letter of protest to the leaders of Santa Cruz, demanding that the cattle be returned or paid for and requiring that these intrusions stop, under vague threat of punitive action against Santa Cruz. The Superintendent's emissaries received a rough reception in Santa Cruz where they were threatened with execution, denied a letter of apology or compensation for the cattle, and ordered to send 1 000 arrobas of gunpowder, for which they were duly paid. The emissaries, Plumridge and Twigge, were held prisoner for several days, during which time they were frequently abused, insulted and threatened, and all afterward considered it lucky they had escaped with their lives.

The return of the humiliated emissaries sparked panic again around Corozal and anger among British authorities. Superintendent Thomas Price, no friend or admirer of the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz, sought permission from his superiors in Jamaica and London (and the necessary forces) to invade rebel territory, seize Bacalar, and deliver that former Yucatecan outpost into the hands of Yucatecan forces. He thought it could be done with little trouble, and he believed he had received assurances from the Mexican consul in British Honduras that such an invasion would not be considered a violation of Mexican sovereignty.[69]

In the meantime Price dispatched additional troops to the Northern District and while awaiting the arrival of warships from Jamaica, he set off to review the situation around Corozal. He found there, he reported, fear rampant.

> We passed through several Ranchos where I had been used to see large numbers of men at sugar cultivation. They were entirely deserted. I think we found exactly four people in their houses with terror on their faces and machetes in their hands, but resigned apparently to any fate. All the rest had

[69] Thomas Price, Acting Superintendent, Belize, to Governor Darling, Jamaica, Honduras Despatch No. 50, 1 May 1861, PRO, WO 32/6201. Concerning the "green light" Price considered he had received from the Mexican representative in British Honduras, see J. Fernando Sauri, Consulado de la República Mexicana en Belice, to Governor of Yucatán, 13 April 1861, AGEY, fondo Poder Ejecutivo, caja 126, Gobernación, Consulado de la República Mexicana en Belice, 1861; and Thomas Price, Acting Superintendent of British Honduras, to L. Basiere, Government of the State of Yucatán, Mérida, 13 April 1861, PRO, WO 32/6201.

> prepared food for their journey, and taken to the bush or crossed to the other refugees. I do not suppose the world has ever seen panic more complete than this, or less done to allay it.[70]

Apparently some of the abandoned ranchos had already been looted, and it was feared that should the exodus continue, it would ensure a Santa Cruz invasion of the district.

Price declared martial law in and around Corozal, directed sundry defensive preparations there, and sought from the two principal local authorities, Edmund Burke, the District Magistrate, and John Carmichael, now justice of the peace, reports on the causes of the panic all about them.

In his report to the Superintendent, Carmichael had little to say that was not already common knowledge. He had not yet developed, it seems, his own channels of communication with the rebel Maya, though his attitude towards them was more benign than Price's, the latter considering them little better than "a race of men to whom bloodshed and mutilation are the pastimes of every day life". Carmichael, rather, viewed the problem as one of a local imbalance of forces. The Santa Cruz rebels, he reported, passed near the frontier from time to time to raid their enemies at Chichanhá, and that movement "tends to keep alive a feeling of distrust in the minds of the Yucatecos settled in this town and district". It was believed in Corozal that Price's emissaries to Santa Cruz had (albeit under duress) promised to deliver gunpowder to Bacalar, and if that promise was not fulfilled, it was feared the rebels would invade Corozal to get it. A few incidents in Corozal —a gun was discharged, a fire broke out, some suspicious Indians were allegedly seen— completed the panic, and "the next morning the country people came pouring in, driving in their cattle etc. having abandoned their Ranchos..." It would be a long time before the people returned to their homes and work, Carmichael estimated.[71]

In any event, Carmichael observed that the steps Price had already taken had done much to stabilize the situation on the frontier. Carmichael did not comment on how his own business fared under such circumstances, but surely the incident provided dramatic evidence of the need

[70] Thomas Price to Governor Darling, Jamaica, Honduras Despatch No. 50, 1 May 1861, PRO, WO 32/6201.

[71] John Carmichael, Justice of the Peace, Corozal, to Thomas Price, 27 April 1861 (enclosure B to Price's 1 May 1861 despatch cited above).

to maintain tranquility in the district if one were going to make any money as landlord and planter. Maintaining tranquility would either mean permanently augmenting British armed forces on the frontier —something not likely to happen— or establishing more predictable and friendly relations with their dangerous neighbors to the north.

Events over the next two years laid the foundation for those more predictable and friendly relations with Santa Cruz that were necessary to the advancement of sugar cultivation in the Northern District. In 1863 the *pacíficos* of Icaiche (successors to those of Chichanhá) adopted a more belligerent stance towards the British than heretofore. They had a long history of extorting payments from logging companies exploiting forests on both sides of the Blue Creek (which the British contended was the boundary of the colony). In 1863 they commenced protesting the support which residents of the colony gave to the Santa Cruz Maya, their persistent enemies. Those protests struck British authorities as especially threatening and probably encouraged, in part, by the government of Campeche.[72] The following year a tangle of personal grievances and rash acts culminated in an Icaiche raid upon a settlement on the British side of the Río Hondo, the taking of hostages, and tense protests from the British.[73] Acting sometimes on their own, sometimes encouraged by Mexican authorities, the Icaiche would remain a threat to colonial settlements and logging operations for some years to come. To the extent that the Santa Cruz Maya remained active enemies of the Icaiche's, they and the British would find a commonality of interests that Carmichael undertook to cultivate and maintain.

1863 and early 1864 also produced a change in leadership at Santa Cruz that facilitated stabilization of relations between the colony and the rebel Maya. The erratic and impetuous Venancio Puc, author of the 1861 humiliation of the British emissaries to Santa Cruz, was assassinated, along with some of his closest colleagues. The leadership of Santa Cruz was upset yet again a few months later when another coup brought to power the triumvirate of Bonifacio Novelo, Bernadino Cen and Crescencio Poot, with all or some of whom the British would have to deal for the next twenty years.

[72] See, for example, Fredereick Seymour, Lieutenant Governor of Belize, to Thomas Aznar Barbachano, Governor of Campeche, 29 June 1863, and Aznar to Seymour, 11 July 1863, both published in *La Nueva Época*, 1/4, 27 July 1863, pp. 2-3.

[73] The events in question are well detailed in Dumond (1997, 272-273).

Meanwhile Carmichael had well settled into his new domains around Corozal. He collected rents from house-lots in the town and from farmers cultivating plots thereabouts. At least one whole village of Maya Indians, Xaibe, filled with refugees from Santa Cruz territory who maintained friendly contacts with their rebel in-laws, was situated on lands owned by Carmichael. They paid Carmichael rent and in addition were required to give twelve days a year labor on Carmichael's sugar estate at San Andrés. Carmichael evidently also operated a retail store in Corozal. It seems doubtful that by that time Carmichael was much involved in logging or logwood cutting, nor does he appear ever to have been seriously engaged in the powder trade with the rebel Maya, at least not as a vendor of that controversial commodity.[74] Things were evidently then looking up for the sugar industry in the Northern District. Carmichael and other northern planters had long lobbied for allowing the transport of Chinese indentured laborers to work on their plantations. Though their plan had earlier been turned down, when they renewed their efforts it apparently helped that the new lieutenant governor, J. Gardiner Austin, had formerly been the official British agent in China for the immigration of indentured Chinese to British colonies. Before long the Chinese were on their way. Four hundred and seventy-five arrived in 1865, of whom 80 were allotted to work on Carmichael's estate. Meanwhile Carmichael had ordered a steam-driven sugar mill for his San Andrés estate (Cal, 1984, 43).[75] His production of cane sugar was good in 1865. He turned out about 200 tons (Cal, 1984, 42).[76]

As Cal details in his study of the papers of the Goshen (Corozal) estate, Carmichael was still entangled in debt to former associates and

[74] For a fuller description of how Carmichael managed his property in and around Corozal, see Cal (1991, 302-308). Concerning rents, see also the report on conditions around Corozal in Manuel Sierra de O'Reilly and Pantaleon Barrera to Sr. Prefecto Político del Departamento de Yucatán, 13 June 1864, published in *La Nueva Época*, 1/88, 24 June 1864, pp. 1-3. Jones (1982, 40), with whose characterization of Carmichael I otherwise agree, asserts that Carmichael enriched himself by means of the powder trade. I've not found evidence he was involved in the trade at all, with the exception of one or two incidents described below. More on the powder trade below.

[75] As for Austin, he was formerly Immigration Agent-General for British Guyana, then in 1859 was appointed emigration agent for China, with his main office in Hong Kong. He continued in that post until his appointment as governor of British Honduras in 1862 (Look Lai, 1993, 71).

[76] In his text Cal suggests that was the production for 1870, though the source he cites suggests it was for 1865, which seems more likely.

London financiers. It was an entanglement from he, which he never managed to extricate himself, though in some respects he likely achieved his financial goals in the years to come (Cal, 1984, 42). In any event, whatever success he could have in his new career depended upon maintaining a laboring, rent-paying, goods-purchasing clientele, and that, in no small measure, would depend upon his political stature in the small and sometimes dangerous world of the north Belizean frontier.

Already the wealthiest and most influential citizen of the Northern District, Carmichael had but one rival who could challenge him locally or in matters pertaining to the Santa Cruz. That was the young, new Magistrate of the District, Edwin Adolphus. Their first contest came quickly, and over the seemingly minor issue of bull fighting. An opponent of cruelty to animals, and evidently sharing the widespread Anglo belief that the Spanish custom was barbaric, Adolphus issued regulations prohibiting bull fighting (and cock- and dog fighting). As a fiesta approached in the predominantly Maya village of Xaibé, a settlement of Carmichael clients, Carmichael issued a counter edict informing the residents of Xaibé that he, the landlord of that place, permitted all "lawful amusement and diversions" there including "playing with bulls without injuring the animals by the use of deadly weapons or torturing them in any manner..."[77] So during the fiesta at Xaibé bull-fighting occurred, and naturally the bulls were tormented. When Adolphus received police reports of what had transpired at Xaibé, he arrested fifteen of those who had participated in tormenting the bull. He would have arrested Carmichael too, though the latter enjoyed some protection by virtue of being justice of the peace.

In a trial that lasted several days, all the accused were convicted, fined and, in most instances, given short periods of hard labor to do in Corozal. Yet Carmichael engineered such a vigorous defense of his clients and had his lawyer give Adolphus such a severe verbal drubbing in court (for which Adolphus had the lawyer arrested), that Carmichael enjoyed some measure of victory in this first clash with the Magistrate.

[77] This case is well summarized and analyzed in Jones (1982, 25-42). Jones relied upon official correspondence and court records from the National Archives of Belize. The quote is from p. 31 of Jones. For a still more extended discussion of the affair, and an interpretation of it as a manifestation of Yucatecan and Maya resistance to domineering English law and British officials, see McNairn (1998, 240ff).

What is more, Xaibé was a community with close contacts to the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz, and intelligence certainly filtered back to them that Carmichael was a sympathetic *patrón*.

In a short study of the case, Grant Jones suggested that the trial revealed factional conflict within the English land-owning or merchant class of the Northern District. While some local notables sided with Carmichael, others with Adolphus, I have found no evidence that that division either antedated the trial nor that divisions over the matter of bull-fighting carried over in subsequent months and years to other issues, in the way necessary before speaking of "factions". However, Carmichael's experiences on the Mosquito Coast would surely have made him wary of the possible treachery of others of his class. Even as some Englishmen had there sided with the Honduran government against the Mosquito authority (thereby seeking to move in on Carmichael's operations), so too might landowners or merchants in the Northern District seek advantage against Carmichael by inciting more distant powers (whether rebel Maya groups or the government in Belize City) to move against him. Carmichael could not trust his own kind.

Carmichael, the Powder Trade and Santa Cruz

Anyone who has written about John Carmichael in British Honduras has asserted or implied that he fomented and advanced the sale of gunpowder to the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz in order to make money for himself. While perhaps there were men in the Northern District whose livelihood depended much upon trade with Santa Cruz, including trade in war materials, there is no good evidence that Carmichael was one of them. There is no good evidence that any man of his stature in that district —i.e. planters and landlords— pursued that commerce with a serious intent to make money. And there is no good evidence that the "British" in general —whatever that should mean— encouraged the trade for its immediate economic benefit. On the contrary, British authorities were perennially ambivalent about the trade and at best permitted it (to the extent that their permission was effective) as a logical extension of their powder trade with the rest of Mexico and Central America. No scholars have yet tried to quantify the British arms trade with Mexico and Central America for this period, and in the aggregate it might have been of

considerable importance to British exporters who specialized in that region.[78] But the powder trade with the rebel Maya must have been a tiny fraction of the overall flow of explosive material to the region.

Carmichael and British Honduran authorities did, on occasion, directly involve themselves in the powder trade with the rebel Maya. Not because it was good business for them, but because it was necessary for the security of the colony. The first evidence of Carmichael's limited involvement in the munitions trade comes in the wake of the colony's on-going troubles with the so-called Maya *pacíficos* of Icaiche.

The ostensible source of friction between British Honduras and the formerly rebel Maya based to the northwest, at Chichanhá and later Icaiche, was the latter's non-acceptance of British sovereignty over the northwest corner of the colony. This was hardly, however, a dispute over land or boundaries, nor did it represent spirited peasant defense of their agricultural and forestry resources. The Icaiche wanted money, and they could get it by shaking down mahogany operations on the northwest frontier. By doing so, they further served the interests of Campeche (and by extension, Mexico) by harassing British operations there and asserting (albeit in a way that little mattered in legal-diplomatic terms) Mexican sovereignty over the disputed territory. Finally, aggravated the Icaiche no end that their mortal enemies, the rebels of Santa Cruz, could so readily supply themselves with munitions in British Honduras, munitions which they time to time turned against the Icaiche themselves.

After a clash between Icaiche soldiers and British troops at San Pedro (with the British putting in a very poor showing), the Superintendent of British Honduras in July 1866 banned all sales of munitions to Indians beyond the northern frontier, making no formal distinction between the Icaiche and Santa Cruz. The prohibition, under penalty of fine and imprisonment, extended not only to direct sales to the Indians, but also to

[78] The only aggregate figure I have found is contained in a report from the Superintendent of British Honduras to his superior, the Governor of Jamaica. Writing in October 1855 he indicated that during the previous 21 months —i.e. all of 1854 and 1855 up to the time of his writing— from the warehouses of Belize City had been sold 661 barrels of gunpowder. I assume a barrel was a quintal or hundredweight, and that the total represented then some 33 tons of powder. That total included exports to Central America via Omoa, Trujillo and Guatemala, gunpowder consumed within British Honduras, and gunpowder exported across the northern frontier to the rebel Maya and Mayas who had made peace with Yucatán. (Stevenson to Berkley, October 1855, published in *Correspondencia Diplomática Cambiada entre el Gobierno de la República y el de su Majestad Británica con Relación al Territorio Llamado Belice, 1872-1878*, Mexico 1878, pp. 75-76.)

sales to anyone who might subsequently sell to the Indians. Since all gunpowder entering Belize was stored in one or more warehouses in Belize City, the ban could reasonably be enforced as concerned large shipments from that city to the rebel territories of the north. The ban could hardly be enforced, however, as concerned the resale of small amounts of powder from myriad points along the frontier.

The ban nonetheless alarmed and angered the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz, who were even then undertaking one of their largest military operations since the early years of the War of the Castes —the siege of the Yucatecan military outpost at Tihosuco. The magistrate of the Northern District, Edwin Adolphus, attempted in contradictory terms to mollify Santa Cruz while extracting concessions from them before lifting the ban on exports of gunpowder. On the one hand he assured them in writing that "the proclamation prohibiting the exportation of arms, ammunition and gunpowder which has just been issued by the Government and of which probably you are already aware, is not intended in the slightest degree to apply to the Santa Cruz Indians". But the ban did apply to them. On the other hand he sought from them signs of their friendliness towards the British and a treaty of sorts addressing British concerns, conditions they might reasonably assume for a resumption of the munitions trade. More specifically, Adolphus sought the return of indentured Chinese laborers who had fled to rebel Maya territory from the Northern District plantations on which they were obliged to labor. And he sought to have the Santa Cruz leaders come to the colony "for the purposes of making a written agreement... guaranteeing them free access to the markets of this colony, for any purpose whatsoever, conditionally however upon their agreement". Santa Cruz would have to "respect and to require all other Indians to respect Her Majesty's Territories on this side of the Hondo from the mouth at Consejo to the source of Blue Creek", including, that is, the territory disputed between British Honduras and the Icaiche. Santa Cruz would be obliged to "keep the peace on the Yucatán side along the whole course of the Hondo, and to remove all bad characters therefrom". And Santa Cruz would have to agree to deliver over to the English authorities any Indians or Yucatecans being criminals, absconding from justice. To clarify that latter provision, a fourth was stipulated, requiring Santa Cruz to "deliver over any Indians or Yucatecans who may have crossed the river for the purpose of committing excesses on the persons or properties of parties resident in British territory". That provision

would, in other words, require the Santa Cruz to refrain from their periodic excursions into British territory to round up their deserters or debtors.[79]

Adolphus never much liked the troublesome Indians to the north —"a more suspicious and untruthful people... I should imagine it would be difficult elsewhere to find"— and his chances of coming to terms with them were nil. He never got a formal reply to his letters, but from a favored trader at Santa Cruz whom Adolphus used as go-between (José Andrade) he learned that the Indians suspected Adolphus was trying to lure them into a trap. They had, apparently, heard from their enemies in the besieged outpost of Tihosuco that "Ah, Malditos Indios, make haste and get through that powder you bought from the English, for you will get no more". When they soon thereafter received Adolphus' two letters they told themselves: "Here, you see, the Mexicans did indeed speak truly, for the English clearly wish to deceive us."[80] Adolphus learned from the trader that the Indians had no intention of returning the Chinese laborers, as the cross at Tulum "had ordered that they are to be well treated and taught to work..." they being "Indians like themselves". Besides, they had already been parceled out as servants to Maya officers. Through the trader Andrade tried again to explain that the gunpowder ban was due only to the troubles with the Icaiche, the Santa Cruz leaders insisted to be lifted. If not, General Bernadino Cen threatened, he would seize Corozal and presumably take the merchandise he needed. First they had a fiesta to celebrate, then they would raise troops, and then "it will be seen what they can do".[81] A few days after receiving the bad news from Andrade, Adolphus interviewed another well-known trader who had recently returned from Bacalar. From the rebel commandant there the trader, José María Trejo, had learned that

> if in two or three months time we can't get powder we will go to Corozal and demand of the Magistrate [Adolphus] and Don Juan Carmichael why

[79] Edwin Adolphus, Magistrate, Northern District, Corozal, to Bonifacio Novelo, President of Santa Cruz, Bernabel Cen and Cresencio Poot, Santa Cruz, 2 August 1866; and Adolphus to same, 26 August 1866; both from AB, r. 93.

[80] Edwin Adolphus, Magistrate to Thomas Graham, Belize City, 4 December 1866, AB, r. 93.

[81] Edwin Adolphus, Magistrate to Thomas Graham, 4 December 1866, AB, r. 93. The trader Andrade reported that privately Cen had confided to him that he did understand the reasons for the powder ban, but that his troops did not —i.e. that he would be compelled to act against the British by the force of public opinion in rebel territory. That may well have been an invention of Andrade, trying to smooth over relations between Adolphus, who favored him with such missions, and the Santa Cruz leaders, who favored him with their commissions.

> we can't get powder. We do not go for the purpose of fighting but only to make this demand, but should any dare to fire [on] us, then we will act. Because we have [been] give [n] no possible reason for the English to deprive us of powder. If however they will persist in closing the sale of powder we will go should we be so inclined not only to Corozal but also to Belize.

The commandant apparently went on openly to regret that his secretary was not present, as he would write all this directly to Adolphus and Carmichael. Especially the latter, for, as the commandant noted, "he, Don Juan, will lose more than us".[82]

The unpleasant scenario that was unfolding must have seemed familiar to Carmichael, suitably educated as he was by the devastating disruptions of commerce and labor that minor armed intrusion had caused him on the Mosquito shore. He wasted no time nudging Adolphus aside and undertaking himself to work out a settlement with Santa Cruz.

Just a week after Trejo made his report on his trip to Bacalar, Carmichael wrote directly to the leaders at Santa Cruz. To "His Excellencies" Novelo, Poot and Cen at Santa Cruz, Carmichael explained that "an armed band of robbers from Icaiché having been molesting our frontier for some time past, has necessitated the restriction in the sale of powder by His Excellency the Governor for their punishments, not owing to any act on the part of the Indians of Santa Cruz". Carmichael proposed meeting with them to discuss "the removal of all restrictions on trade with this Colony and Santa Cruz. I have the authority of the Governor to make a proposition which I have no doubt you will consider favourable to yourselves and having such a large interest at stake, I am anxious that all restrictions be removed".[83]

A Maya commandant at Bacalar had darkly observed that Carmichael had more to loose than they; Carmichael in return acknowledged that he had a large interest at stake. What was that interest? What was it that the Mayas understood he would regret loosing? Receipts from trade with Santa Cruz? That seems unlikely. There is no evidence that Carmichael was significantly involved in that trade prior to inserting himself into the dispute as negotiator. More certainly, what Carmichael had to loose, were his rents and his crops. An invasion would send labor

[82] Declaration of José María Trejo, Corozal, 23 December 1866, AB, r. 89.

[83] John Carmichael, Corozal, to Bonifacio Novelo, Crescencio Poot, and Bernabel [sic.] Quen, Santa Cruz, 30 December 1866, AB, r. 89.

and tenants fleeing, making his land well neigh worthless. And, of course, Carmichael could loose his life, a possibility that crossed the minds of anyone who displeased the Indians of Santa Cruz.

It appears Carmichael had not yet actually obtained official sanction for his negotiations with Santa Cruz, though judging from the good relations that he enjoyed with Lieutenant Governor Austin, Carmichael may well have received a private nod. On the 3rd of January the Lieutenant Governor brought before his Executive Council letters that Carmichael had written him concerning resumption of the munitions trade with Santa Cruz. The Executive Council was not swayed, and reiterated the ban, "until the object of the proclamation has been attained in the tranquilization of the Hondo and western frontier a result within the power of the Indian tribes..."[84] Meanwhile, however, Carmichael had dispatched another letter to the Lieutenant Governor, this time seeking authority to negotiate "a treaty of amity and commerce" with the Santa Cruz Indians. The Council approved that proposal.[85]

The Lieutenant Governor, with or without his colleagues realizing it, was maneuvering to lift the ban on trade in munitions without appearing to have abandoned the original rationale of the ban. He agreed with the Council's decisions not to lift the ban back on the 3rd of January, but confided to Carmichael that he had not agreed to continue the restrictions on trade under all circumstances.

> However much we might deplore the position in which the past had placed us, it seemed to me quite impossible to build up an entirely different system. Therefore I proposed that conditionally on arrangements being made by the Santa Cruz Indians, alone or combined with others, to prevent further aggressions we should offer them unrestrictedly the enjoyment of all the advantages which had been temporarily withdrawn. [More clearly, he went on to write:] I shall have no hesitation in letting the Powder Proclamation die out, once I am assured by positive proof of the intention, either of the Santa Cruz or Locha Indians, one or both to curb the turbulent spirits of Icaiche and to prevent their direct aggression or indirect aid to traitors on this side.

[84] I have not found Carmichael's letters in question. He presumably wrote in support of lifting the ban. Mention of the letters is contained in Extract of the minutes of the Executive Council held at Government House 3rd January 1867, AB, r. 89.

[85] Extract of the minutes of the Executive Council held at Government House 5th January 1867, AB, r. 89.

Going even further than any of his predecessors, Austin confided that he believed the time had come to recognize the rebel Maya leadership as de facto rulers of their territory, no longer as rebels against a government, but as a government like any other. What he wanted, principally, in return was tranquility on the northern frontier and, as Carmichael was instructed, recognition that the northern boundary followed the northernmost tributary of the Río Hondo, Blue Creek, a boundary which both the Icaiche's and the Mexicans disputed.[86]

Austin did not want Carmichael actually to go to Bacalar, "especially as an officer commissioned by the Government". Rather, Carmichael should entice the rebel leaders to come here to negotiate. And Carmichael should be wary of whom he chose to carry messages back and forth, for "much of the suspicion against us seems to have arisen from the untruthful character of the go between..."[87]

Not long after Carmichael received his instructions to negotiate with Santa Cruz, the Santa Cruz response to Carmichael's 30 December 1866 communication arrived. In their 18 January letter to Carmichael Novelo, Poot and Cen responded that they had nothing to do with the Icaiche, and certainly had not encouraged the latter to harass their friends the English. They assured Carmichael that "what we desire [towards the English] is peace and friendship... we have no quarrel with the English whatever; we bear hatred only towards the Spaniards of Yucatán, as they come into our lands to seek us out and do us harm... You yourself must know Respected Sir, [they ventured] that we are the original inhabitants of Yucatán".

As for negotiating with Carmichael, the Santa Cruz leaders saw no need of that.

> Now with respect to making a treaty with us, should you wish to come to Bacalar and do so, we have to ask you not to give yourself the trouble. This letter which we write as an answer to yours respected Sir, we think sufficient, as God is sufficient for us all and we trust that He will not allow any quarrel to arise between us, as such neither exists in our wishes or in our hearts. Therefore respected Sir, do not suspect us, or have any fear of us.

[86] Extract of the minutes of the Executive Council held at Government House 8th January 1867, AB, r. 89.

[87] J. Gardiner Austin, Lieutenant Governor, Belize, to John Carmichael, Corozal, 7 January 1867, AB, r. 89.

That said, seemingly satisfying any concerns the Englishmen might have, Carmichael was asked to "be good enough to obtain permission that powder, lead and flints may be brought us, such as we have always been accustomed to buy. Do not fail to execute this commission which we give you, even if it should be 100 arrobas [i.e. 2 500 lbs.] or whatever you can get". They also invited Carmichael to come with the trader Andrade to "this Great Town of Santa Cruz", as "we think that as possibly you may have business here, it is good you should come and visit this holy town". With that they concluded, "May the Great God keep your respected person for an infinity of years".[88]

The prohibition on the sale of powder and weapons to the Indians had been prompted by concerns for the security of the frontier (i.e. the Icaiche), and it had in turn engendered new concerns about the security of the colony (i.e. Santa Cruz). Lieutenant Governor Austin, and presumably his Executive Council, were prepared to cast the ban aside if an agreement could be reached whereby Santa Cruz recognized Belize's claimed northern boundary and whereby Santa Cruz (perhaps with help from the *indios pacíficos* of Campeche), undertook to restrain the Icaiche. Santa Cruz saw nothing new in these proposals, the Icaiche's had always been their enemies, the English their friends, and the precise location of the border had never been in dispute between them. (There had been some problems concerning the nature of a border, and what you can do on the other person's side of it, but that issue had fallen temporarily by the wayside.) So Santa Cruz saw no need to make formal agreements. Besides, the last Santa Cruz leaders to be accused of conspiring to negotiate with outsiders had been assassinated, precisely by those now in power there. And as General Cen had alluded to in his December words to Andrade, though he understood what the Englishman wanted, his troops would not understand. So, it seems they would not risk engaging in what appeared to be negotiations, treaty-making, etc. They just wanted the English to send their powder.

Austin and Carmichael would have to bend if they hoped to put behind them the nuisance of the powder prohibition. Carmichael wrote to Austin from Corozal on January 18th, forwarding the Santa Cruz response and suggesting that "it might be politic on our part to allow as a

[88] Bonifacio Novelo, José Crescencio Poot, and Bernadino Cen, Santa Cruz, to John Carmichael, Corozal, 18 January 1867, AB, r. 89. I have only seen the English translation of this letter.

proof of our goodwill, this single transaction in Powder. And follow up the idea we started with of coming to an understanding with them. I throw this out merely as a suggestion, but if followed up it would go far to gain their confidence". Give them the powder first, and then negotiate, Carmichael was suggesting. "I think by all means we should get them to send [a] Commissioner to treat."[89]

The Lieutenant Governor wasted no time in responding positively to Carmichael's suggestion. In his 2 February reply Austin accepted that "it is quite evident as you say from the action being taken across the line of Country occupied by the Icaiches, that Altho the Santa Cruz Indians are not disposed to enter into definite obligations. They are desirous of contributing to the pacification of the border as far as feasible..." Besides, Austin added, dredging up the long forgotten slip on the part of Adolphus, "we are doubly bound to such course by the pledge given through Mr. Adolphus to the effect that the powder restrictions were not intended to apply to the Santa Cruz Indians or others in amity with us..." So, Austin stated, "I shall have no hesitation in giving to you an export certificate for Bacalar direct. In the same way as I am doing for Izabal, Omoa, and Trujillo..." Yucatecan authorities will protest, he added, and they might try to send the Icaiche's against them once more. However, Austin noted, "one cannot afford to quarrel with a powerful tribe which seeks to be on terms of amity with us, and moreover according to my view the time is past for ignoring a *de facto* Government which exercises far more authority throughout its territory than we do through ours".[90]

With good news to report, it seems Carmichael wrote to Santa Cruz on the 5th of February. He evidently not only reported that powder could be sold, but also sought a goodwill gesture in return —namely, as the Magistrate Adolphus had vainly sought, to have Santa Cruz send back the indentured Chinese laborers who had fled to rebel territory.[91]

Carmichael and Austin had a special interest in the Chinese. Prior to assuming his duties as Lieutenant Governor in British Honduras, Austin had served as the British agent for indenturing and exporting Chinese labor from Macao. His arrival on the scene in British Honduras in no small measure ensured that that colony would finally get the Chinese

[89] John Carmichael to Lieutenant Governor Austin, 29 January 1867, AB, r. 89.

[90] Lieutenant Governor Austin to John Carmichael, 2 February 1867, AB, r. 89.

[91] I have not found any copy of Carmichael's 5 February 1867 letter to Santa Cruz, but the letter is mentioned in John Carmichael to Lieutenant Governor Austin, 11 March 1867 [second letter written that day], AB, r. 89

laborers it had for some time sought. Some of those who fled the estates of the Northern District, where they considered themselves ill fed and over worked, had fled from Carmichael's own estate of San Andrés. Still, while he would continue to discuss this issue with Austin, neither man appears to have wanted this to obstruct a return to "normal" relations with Santa Cruz.[92]

The Santa Cruz leaders wrote directly to the Lieutenant Governor on the 16th of February, asking him to give the order that one José Santos López bring gunpowder to them for the celebration of their upcoming festival.

> Your Excellency need have no care about the people of Santa Cruz. [They assured the Lieutenant Governor.] Because Sir, we offer the truth to God our Lord and afterwards to you Gentleman that we will never proceed in bad faith against you, because it is not that which God has sent us in our hearts, but only mutual friendship which we ask God that we may have with you. That is all that we have to say to you and God guard you for ever and we love you heartily.

[92] How many of the escaped Chinese laborers were from Carmichael's estate, and what was the economic consequence for Carmichael of their flight from his employ? Dumond cites a report implying that most of the Chinese who fled did so from estates of the British Honduras Company, and he cites a later report indicating that the troubles with the Chinese had been most acute on Carmichael's property at San Andrés (Dumond, 1997, 290). The former seems to have been the case. When the 474 Chinese arrived back in 1866 Carmichael received an allotment of only 80, for which he paid 612 pounds sterling (Cal, 1984, 43). He was evidently ambivalent about the quality of their work (Dumond, 1997, 290). By January 1870 there were only 49 Chinese left on Carmichael's San Andrés estate (Dumond, 1997, 491). Of the 150 Chinese laborers who had fled estates of the Northern District by October 1868, then, no more than 31 are likely to have come from Carmichael's service, suggesting most of those who fled did flee from other estates. The Chinese did not fare so well in rebel territory, and some sought to return to Belize. One returnee described the conditions that had prompted him to flee and his experiences among the rebel Maya. He was from an estate owned by the British Honduras Company. According to Lua Lat, "I deserted with six others about three years ago. A great number had deserted before us. We ran away because we had not enough been supplied us to eat, and the manager... ill-treated us". Lua Lat did indicate that it was an escape from Carmichael's service who encouraged them to flee to the rebel Maya where they were led to believe "there was plenty to eat and also that everything was cheap". Carmichael's escaped laborer would escort them as far as Bacalar, where an Indian officer would take charge of them, while the Chinese man would go back to the Northern District to entice more of his countrymen into flight. That raises the interesting possibility that it was precisely Carmichael's close contacts to the Santa Cruz that had led, inadvertently, to the establishment of this short-lived underground railroad. See Declaration of Lua Lat, Corozal, 1 September 1869, included with J.K. Longden to Grant, 16 September 1869, AB, r. 98.

Lest the Lieutenant Governor misunderstand, a translator either in Corozal or Belize City produced a second version of this letter, in which it was clarified that they sought that Lopez Santos be given permission to bring them gunpowder "for which we will pay him".

To make the letter seem less embarrassingly sentimental, I suppose, the new translation closed with the wish that God protect His Excellency, "which is the desire of our hearts".[93]

That letter from the Santa Cruz leaders may have been written in response to Carmichael's 5 February communication conveying news that powder could be had. If so, it was an oblique response. That is to say, Carmichael did not recognize it as a response to his letter, as by early March he was still waiting to hear from them.[94] In any event, the Santa Cruz leaders evidently did not know when they wrote to the Lieutenant Governor that a shipment of gunpowder and other merchandise had been assembled in Corozal and shipped to Bacalar the day before.[95] It never arrived.

One Francisco Moreno was in immediate charge of the shipment. He and two others, Yucatecos it seems, departed Corozal on the 15th of February carrying 40 arrobas of gunpowder (i.e. 1000 pounds) and other merchandise. Unknown to them, however, the previous December the Imperial authority of Yucatán had sent a secret agent to Corozal. He had the instruction to collect rents due for use of the lands and forests on the Mexican side of the border. So that it would interfere with any attempts to ship powder to the rebel Maya, and he would seize and return to Yucatán any he might apprehend involved in that trade. Francisco Meneses was the name of the agent.[96]

[93] I have only seen English translations of this letter. One version seems closer to the original, because it preserves the stereotypical semantic and grammatical parallelism of formal Maya speech —"At this hour of the day of Holy Saturday" v.s. "On this Holy Saturday". One version is to be found as Bonifacio Novelo, Bernadino Cen, José C. Poot, Santa Cruz, to Governor [sic.] of British Honduras, Belize, 16 February 1867, AB, r. 96, the other in r. 89.

[94] John Carmichael to Lieutenant Governor Austin, 11 March 1867, AB, r. 89.

[95] Dumond, who gives a full account of the heist of the gunpowder, indicates that the powder had been loaded first at Belize City over the protests of the Legislative Assembly of the colony (1997, 293-295).

[96] José María Martínez, Corozal, to Lieutenant Governor Austin, 27 February 1867, AB, r. 89. Martínez, then a British subject, was former Mexican consul to British Honduras. The agent Meneses had presented himself and his orders to Martínez upon his arrival back in December. That he did not immediately report Meneses to British authorities was something he later tried to explain to the Lieutenant Governor by claiming he had not taken Meneses seriously.

When Moreno and his companions entered the Río Hondo, Meneses and five others were waiting for them. A struggle between the occupants of the adverse canoes ensued, one member of Moreno's crew was shot, and the cargo was captured. Word of the interception of the munitions shipment reached Bacalar quickly, and that same evening the rebel commandant of Bacalar dispatched troops to capture the pirates.[97] But the pirates escaped, and the goods were lost.[98]

Was this Carmichael's shipment to Santa Cruz, and was he doing it for the money? The evidence is not clear. On the one hand Austin had said he would give Carmichael authorization to ship munitions to Santa Cruz, and the shipment in question occurred shortly thereafter. And when Juan Yam wrote (presumably to the Magistrate Adolphus) concerning rebel efforts to intercept the pirates, he referred specifically to the "powder that Mr. Carmichael was sending". On the other hand, I have not found that Carmichael ever mentioned the incident in any of his subsequent communications British authorities, nor does his name ever come up elsewhere in connection with the case. Two of those accompanying the shipment were themselves merchants —Francisco Moreno, who was in charge of the expedition, and José Magaña—[99] and they may have undertaken the venture at their own expense. Dumond, in his treatment of the incident, concluded that it was not Carmichael's shipment (Dumond, 1997, 491, fn. 18). That seems likely. Even better, Carmichael had not risked his own neck or capital, but got the credit nonetheless from those whom he most wanted to impress —the Indians of Santa Cruz.

Suppose it had been Carmichael's shipment. Would its success or failure have been of much direct economic significance to him? Was he

[97] Juan Yam, Esteves, to Respectable Sir and Friend [Carmichael, I assume], 17 January 1867, AB, r. 89. My notes indicate that the letter was so dated, though surely, given its content, it was written in February, not January.

[98] The Acting Colonial Secretary of British Honduras posted a reward for the capture of Meneses and his accomplices (Thomas Graham, Acting Colonial Secretary, 22 February 1867, found on page 76 of *Correspondencia diplomática cambiada entre el gobierno de la República y el de su Majestad Británica con relación al territorio llamado Belice, 1872-1878*, Mexico, 1878.) Shortly afterwards one of Moreno's crew died from complications presumed to have derived from the wounds he received during the assault. Miguel Mena, one of Meneses accomplices was captured, tried and convicted of murder, and after many years of confinement, was executed in Corozal. (See again, Dumond, 1997, 294-5.)

[99] Magaña is mentioned as a merchant allied to Santa Cruz in an Icaiché list of such enemies, Marcos Canul, General en Jefe, República Mexicana, Estado de Campeche, Línea del Sur, to Governor of Belize, 4 May 1870, AB, r. 106.

trying to get rich selling powder, as one historian has suggested of him in particular, and as observers hostile to the British have supposed to have been the case? To answer that, one at least needs to know what 400 arrobas of gunpowder was worth. Strikingly little data is available that would shed light on just what Indians paid for gunpowder, shot, flints, even firearms. Surely what they paid varied depending upon just where they were buying —from merchants in Bacalar, from small suppliers along the Río Hondo, or at the source, in Belize City. However, there are suggestions that over many years the price they expected to pay did not much vary —5 or 6 pesos / arroba for gunpowder— which is some indication presumably of their experience from past purchases.[100]

The 400 arrobas of powder that was hijacked could or would have been sold to the Indians, it seems fair to estimate, at between 2 000 and 4 000 dollars or pesos (i.e. at between 5 and 10 pesos / arroba). Whether Moreno was marketing this to the Indians on his own account, or whether Moreno was acting for Carmichael, neither man would have realized a profit of that much, of course. They did not manufacture gunpowder, import it from England or the United States, and warehouse it in Belize City until a purchaser appeared. Others did that work, with the middlemen in Belize City most likely enjoying (as so often happens) the lion's share of the profits. Even if Moreno / Carmichael could mark-up the wares 100%, they could at best have realized 1 000 to 2 000 dollars on the deal.

[100] My estimate is based on the following:

a) Rebel Mayas from Santa Cruz showed up on the Río Hondo in August or September of 1856, expecting to be able to purchase 100 arrobas of gunpowder for 600 pesos (i.e. 6 pesos / arroba). On that occasion they had to pay much more dearly, 19 pesos / arroba, but presumably their expectation of obtaining it for 6 pesos was based upon past experience (Cirilio Baqueiro, Comandancia de la línea de Hopelchen, to Comandante en general del estado, 8 September 1856, AGEY Ejecutivo, caja 103).

b) Pacífico leader Tzuc called upon Toledo and Company to pay rent past due on mahogany lands. They required either 300 pesos, or 30 arrobas each of powder and shot, indicating that they reckoned an arroba of powder or shot to be worth on average 5 pesos (P. Toledo to G. Austin, Lieutenant Governor, 2 August 1866, AB, r. 89).

c) Pacífico leader Encalada sought to purchase from Belize 30 arrobas of gunpowder for 150 pesos (i.e. 5 pesos / arroba) (Pablo Encalada to G. Austin, 4 March 1867, AB, r. 89)

d) In 1873 gunpowder was allegedly available in Bacalar for a real y medio for 1 / 2 pound (i.e. 9 pesos / arroba) (Declaration of Martin Beltran communicated in R. Bolio, Jefatura política de Tekax, to Governor of Yucatán, 30 June 1873, published in *La Razón del Pueblo*, vol. 7, no. 903, 2 July 1873, p. 2.)

e) John Carmichael obtained gunpowder for Tulum at 5 pesos / arroba (John Carmichael, San Andrés, British Honduras, to Inocente Chablé and María Uicab, Tulum, 10 August 1870, published in *La Razón del Pueblo*, vol. 5, no. 536, 1 Marzo 1871, p. 3.)

For a small merchant (like Moreno) or the many small traffickers along the Río Hondo for whom their dealings with the rebel Indians were the mainstay of their living, that would be a sizable amount of money, and money was surely their motive. For Carmichael the money could hardly justify the risk and aggravation, much less make him a man richer than he already was. His annual income from renting land to farmers and house-lots to residents of Corozal amounted to over $8 000 per year, and his San Andrés estate could produce some 120 tons of sugar per year, worth perhaps an additional $14 000.[101] Carmichael assisted in the munitions trade for reasons other than immediate, pecuniary gain. Those efforts did not end with the foiled February effort to get gunpowder to Santa Cruz.

Though the gunpowder did not reach them, Santa Cruz quickly reciprocated for the *de facto* lifting of the ban on the munitions trade. By 19th February John Carmichael's son, a captain in the British Honduran militia stationed in the Northern District could report that a Santa Cruz delegation headed by a Commandant was posting notices in villages all along the rebel side of the Río Hondo. The notices warned inhabitants not to obey the troublesome Icaiché chief Canul and declared that anyone who took up arms against the English would forfeit their lives. The notices also evidently called upon the inhabitants to pay tribute to Santa Cruz. Carmichael Jr. also reported (all of this third hand) that Santa Cruz had sent communications to Canul calling upon him to withdraw his forces from British territory (from the disputed territory south of Blue Creek?), lay down his arms, and surrender to them, Santa Cruz.

Canul did none of that, but Belizean authorities looked favorably upon the gesture Santa Cruz had made. The powder ban was officially and finally lifted two weeks later when a Mr. Harley of Belize City received an export permit to ship 30 arrobas of gunpowder to the Santa Cruz Indians. In granting the permit the Executive Council alluded to the favorable reports just received from John Carmichael Jr., a thin but evidently sufficient pretext for ending the troublesome ban.[102]

[101] Concerning rent receipts, see "The Memorial of John Carmichael, Andrew Hall, Steward Carter, William Jones, and others... to His Excellency Charles Buller Hugh Mitchell Esquire, Administrator of the Government of British Honduras and the Honorable the Executive Council of the said Colony", ca. May 1870, AB, r. 106. Carmichael's estate produced 120 tons of sugar in 1867-1868 (Philip Hankin, Colonial Secretary, "Report of a visit to Corozal and Caledonia", 1868, AB, r. 101). The most recent price for local sugar that I have was from 1858, six dollars / hundredweight (*The New York Herald*, 18 November 1858, p. 3).

[102] Regarding the Santa Cruz notices along the Hondo, see John Carmichael Jr., Captain, British Honduran Militia, to Governor Austin, Belize City, 19 February 1867, Archives of

Carmichael and Lieutenant Governor Austin evidently saw eye to eye on how the colony's relations with the Santa Cruz Indians should be constituted. Santa Cruz should be recognized as the *de facto* government of the eastern half of the Yucatán Peninsula. During the remainder of the spring and summer of 1867 steps were taken in that direction, with Carmichael cheering and encouraging the Lieutenant Governor along.

In early March, Carmichael wrote to Belize City to give the Lieutenant Governor moral support that may have been lacking in the port city.

> It is no doubt annoying to see the temper of some of the Belis [sic.] Community, but your Excellency can really afford to laugh at them —for their shortsighted policy. Time will show it— and prove that you and the Governor General [in Jamaica] have exercised wise & discrete policy in treating Sta. Cruz as a Govt. de facto —and deserve the thanks of the community.

Carmichael had not yet got to meet with official Indian commissioners —i.e. those with whom he was to negotiate under authority granted by the Executive Council back in January, but the feelers were encouraging. He still hoped to get back the Chinese laborers who had fled. At least those who had fled from estates run by Englishmen, as opposed to Yucatecans in the Northern District. And he had evidently received from the Santa Cruz Indians proposals to have each side, Indian and English, issue passports for travel on the Río Hondo, a measure to allow the Indians to impede the movements of unfriendliness.[103] Lower raking Maya officers met with Carmichael in Corozal in early May. No good record of what they talked about was kept, Carmichael simply reporting afterward that "they are well pleased with their visit to Corozal and promise to return on Business with Pigs, Hammocks, etc. in 4 or 5 weeks". Carmichael did take that occasion; however, to suggest to the Lieutenant Governor that they eliminate all duties on the import of Santa Cruz

Belize, r. 89. Regarding Harley's getting a permit to ship powder, see Minutes of the Council Meeting of 1 March 1867, AB, r. 82. He received permission to ship 30 quarter barrels to Bacalar. I assume that a barrel was a hundredweight (*quintal*), and that the quarter barrel was therefore equivalent to the Spanish measure, the arroba. Harley, of Belize City, had evidently supplied Santa Cruz in past years. He was a friend of the Santa Cruz trade José Andrade, and a man to whom Andrade would turn to get gunpowder for the Indians. See Declaration of José Domingo Andrade, Corozal, May 1866, AB, r. 93.

[103] John Carmichael to Lieutenant Governor Austin, 11 March 1867 [two letters on that date], AB, r. 89

products into the colony ("corn, poultry, pigs, hammocks, etc."), provided still that Santa Cruz return the Chinese laborers. Though the Chinese laborers were not sent back, Austin agreed to eliminate the duties.[104]

Now thinking strategically, Carmichael went on to propose that the Santa Cruz be encouraged to form alliances with neighboring Indians —the *pacíficos* of Campeche and even Indians who had recently fled British territory— "their object is to control them so as to keep peace on our frontier". "I am clearly of the opinion that we should encourage Sta. Cruz to make alliances of the kind that I speak of. It is the best safeguard for this colony", Carmichael concluded.[105] Most likely these are the issues he would have discussed with one of the top ranking Maya generals, Bernadino Cen, whom Carmichael expected to meet in Bacalar in June. That meeting did not occur, however, as Cen and other rebel commanders had launched a major offensive in the *pacífico* region of Campeche, designed it seems to cause that region to return to the rebel fold.[106]

Though Carmichael did not get to meet with General Cen, in June the Santa Cruz generals did send officers to him on a mission to get more gunpowder. Again, it seems it was not actually Carmichael who would sell them the powder. Someone, perhaps Carmichael himself, negotiated the sale of 220 arrobas of gunpowder between Santa Cruz and a Belize City supplier, and in June Carmichael simply provided the officers with a letter of introduction encouraging the Lieutenant Governor to issue the appropriate permit.[107]

Had Carmichael and Austin continued to work together in effectively treating Santa Cruz as the *de facto* government to the north of the colony, they may have succeed in dragging British policy into very troubled waters there. As it happened, a Lieutenant Governor much less sympathetic to both the Santa Cruz Indians and John Carmichael soon replaced Aus-

[104] That Austin agreed to eliminate the duties I infer from John Carmichael to Lieutenant Governor Austin, 8 August 1867, AB, r. 96. In that letter Carmichael reported that "The Santa Cruz people express disappointment with the new tariff. [T]hey understood and so did I that all their produce except horses and cattle would be admitted free".

[105] John Carmichael to Lieutenant Governor Austin, 11 May 1867, AB, r. 96.

[106] That Carmichael had hoped to meet Cen, but could not, because Cen was engaged in operations, see John Carmichael to Lieutenant Governor Austin, 1l June [possibly 17 June] 1867, AB, r. 96. Concerning the Santa Cruz offensive in the Chenes, and Cen's involvement in it, see Dumond (1997) and Sullivan (1998).

[107] John Carmichael to Lieutenant Governor. Austin, 17 June 1867, AB, r. 96. The Lieutenant Governor was not at that time in the colony, so the Maya officers had to wait in Belize City until Austin's written authorization could be obtained. I do not know how long that was.

tin. Though Carmichael's prestige and influence among the Santa Cruz continued to grow, his effectiveness as a mediator of Indian-English relations had reached its peak with the departure of his friend Austin.

I argued earlier that trade with Santa Cruz, whether in war materiel or ordinary produce, was not Carmichael's motive in dealing with them. Rather, I have argued, by acting as a diplomatic go-between Carmichael sought to protect his rents and productive regime in the Northern District. However the Santa Cruz leaders did not care to make such a fine distinction between trade and diplomacy. From time to time in their communications they pointed out that they viewed such trade —especially trade in war materiel— as a sign of the friendly intentions and good feelings of the English. In any event, by September 1867, if not John Carmichael the father, than John Carmichael the son, commenced to involve himself more directly in trade with Santa Cruz, starting with an expedition to the rebel capital at the end of that month.[108]

When John Carmichael Jr. and his entourage arrived in Bacalar in late September he was greeted there as an important visitor, not an ordinary trader.

> The Commandant of Bacalar, an intelligent looking Indian, received me on the wharf with a guard of honour of fifty men with drums beating and bugles blowing. He conducted me to his quarters, one of the best houses at the corner of the Plaza, where he entertained me most hospitably, [and] furnished me with horses for myself, servants, and baggage as well as six Indian soldiers for escort.[109]

His reception in Santa Cruz was even grander. As he waited with his escort at the edge of the rebel capital, one of the principal rebel leaders, Crescencio Poot, came out formally to receive him.

> Accompanied by a guard of honour of 200 men and a band of music of 30 performers, I was conducted into the town through triumphal arches at each

[108] I have no evidence that John Carmichael Jr., a Captain in the British Honduran militia, had been involved in such trade before. In his lengthy report on this visit to Santa Cruz, he explicitly stated that no one —i.e. no one like himself— had been there before. And the detailed observations he made of conditions in Bacalar suggest —but do not prove— that he had not been there before, either. (John Carmichael Jr., Corozal, to J.R. Longden, Lieutenant Governor, British Honduras, 15 November 1867, AB, r. 93.

[109] John Carmichael Jr. to J.R. Longden, 15 November 1867, AB, r. 93.

cross street. There were soldiers who presented arms, while on arriving in the Plaza or Principal Square I found about 1000 men under arms who saluted as I passed.

The following day Carmichael Jr. had audiences with two of the principal leaders of Santa Cruz, Bonifacio Novelo, head of the church, and Bernadino Cen, head at that time of the rebel armed forces. They regaled Carmichael with boasts of their wealth and power, and recounted to him their grievances against, even hatred of, the "Spanish". Novelo explained that the rebel goal was nothing less than recovery of the entire peninsula of Yucatán, "land which had always belonged to their ancestors," while General Cen evidently spoke "with the greatest contempt" of an expected encounter with Yucatecan forces. According to Carmichael he also attended a meeting with all three of the principal leaders: Novelo, Cen and Poot. They put a question to him: If Yucatán renewed a prior peace offering, one that would allow the rebels to retain possession of all the territory they then held. Would British Honduras be willing to annex that territory "The Santa Cruz Indians laying down their arms, and becoming British subjects in every respect"?

The purpose and nature of Carmichael Jr.'s visit to Santa Cruz is shrouded in some mystery. It seems not to have been preceded by any communication to authorities in Belize. And despite the significant information he had to bring back to British Honduras, it seems that Carmichael Jr. delayed considerable time in reporting to the Lieutenant Governor.[110] Perhaps he had gone on private business, without the intention of reporting anything to Belize. If that was the case, a 30th October communication from Santa Cruz to John Carmichael Sr. spurred the Carmichael's to report at length to the Lieutenant Governor.

On the 30th of October Novelo, Cen and Poot drafted a warning to Carmichael. They reported that the Icaiche were planning to attack Corozal. The Santa Cruz leaders pledged to warn Carmichael when the

[110] In his 15 November 1867 report to the Lieutenant Governor, Carmichael Jr. opened by stating that he had "just returned from a visit to the Santa Cruz Indians in Yucatán". It seems likely, however, that he had returned some weeks before. If, as he so precisely stated in his report, he had first set out for Santa Cruz on September 21st, and if he arrived in Santa Cruz on the 28th or 29th of September, as his report implies, a "recent" return in November leaves too much time unaccounted for. His report of his visit to Santa Cruz recounts no more events than would occupy him there for three days or so. Even if he had stayed three weeks (doing what?), he would have returned to British Honduras late in October.

Icaiche started to move, and they pledged to send troops to intercept them. Anticipating, however, that the Icaiche's might get to Corozal, the rebel leaders asked Carmichael to get the Lieutenant Governor to allow Santa Cruz troops to pursue and battle the Icaiche in British territory, even in Corozal itself. Finally, they warned Carmichael that they had been informed that the Icaiche had spies and sympathizers among the white people of Corozal, "who desire to submit to the Enemy and are sending news to them. So we give you notice —and it would be well that you discover the individuals and apprehend them, but if you do not like to confine them then send them here that they may pay for their crimes".[111]

An Icaiche invasion of the Northern District, however brief or limited, could be disastrous for Carmichael for all the reasons previously noted. Indebted laborers would flee and might be hard to find again, renters would abandon ranchos or houses in Corozal and fail to pay their rents, customers for Carmichael's goods would be few. Carmichael may not have taken the warning too urgently, however. He did not forward the Santa Cruz letter to Belize City until the third week of November. When he did so, it went accompanied by Carmichael Jr.'s lengthy report of his visit to Santa Cruz.[112] When forwarding these materials to the Lieutenant Governor, Carmichael evidently implored him to at least temporarily establish a garrison of the British Honduran militia in Corozal, "the inhabitants of which he said were greatly alarmed".[113] But if a British or Colonial force would not defend the Northern District in a timely fashion, then perhaps Carmichael would want to rely on the friendly intervention of Santa Cruz.

That may partly explain the way Carmichael Jr.'s report was crafted to portray the Santa Cruz rebels as a wealthy, numerous, powerful, friendly, well-organized force, which the colony might wish to annex, whose inhabitants in any event merited becoming British subjects. Bonifacio Novelo, for example, was portrayed as "firm yet impartial" in his manner of administering justice, "and the many good traits his character

[111] Bonifacio Novelo, Bernadino Cen, and José Crescencio Poot, Santa Cruz, to John Carmichael, Corozal, 30 October 1867, AB, r. 93. That they would write thus to Carmichael further suggests to me that Carmichael Jr. was no longer in Santa Cruz.

[112] I surmise that from an annotation to the English translation of the 30 October 1867 letter, indicating that it was translated in Belize City on 21 November 1867. That translation of the letter is from AB, r. 101.

[113] Carmichael's suggestion is mentioned in James Longden, Lieutenant Governor, Belize City, to Governor J.P. Grant, Jamaica, 28 November 1867, AB, r. 93.

displayed convinced me that he is peculiarly adapted to govern these Indians, and a very different character from what is represented by the Yucatecans". Head of the army, Bernadino Cen, was "a pure Indian, short, somewhat stout, with a frank open countenance and an eye indicative of courage and resolution". The army he commanded was said to number 11 000 fighting men who performed their duties "most cheerfully... and evasion of it is never attempted". The church of Santa Cruz impressed Carmichael Jr. as reflecting "the greatest credit on the Masonic skill of the Indians", and Carmichael Jr. could assure the Lieutenant Governor that all that superstition about talking crosses was a thing of the past. "Now, the Indians are not imposed on by these mockeries. They are taught to worship the Divine being through the Cross alone, with the exception of their belief in the efficacy of Saints and the absence of priests, their religion is Roman Catholicism..." The land was fertile, maize gave more bountifully there than in British Honduras. "Some of the finest quality of tobacco is grown, and while sugar cane and rice thrive admirably towards the coast, the interior is peculiarly adapted for cotton," Carmichael went on to note, mentioning as well the "dense forests" that supplied many useful woods and products. The subtext to all of this praise was, for sure, Carmichael attempting to convince the new Lieutenant Governor that these people were not savages or barbarians, but orderly, productive, and friendly (towards the British) denizens of a potentially very prosperous land. Hence, in closing, after reporting the chiefs' query about annexation, Carmichael offered his opinion on the merits of such a move.

> It is not for me to attempt to point out to Your Excellency the incalculable benefit that would accrue to our colony by this new accession to her territory. Fresh capital [i.e. the hoarded wealth of the church of Santa Cruz], and that of no inconsiderable amount in addition of some 15 000 labourers, a fresh impetus to trade, and above all a state of security, conducive to immigration which would cause the Colony to become one of the most flourishing and prosperous of Her Majesty's Settlements in the West Indies.

It was all a pipe dream, of course. Carmichael and the former Lieutenant Governor, Austin, had seen eye to eye on treating Santa Cruz as a *de facto* government, and they had worked slowly towards that end. Carmichael could get no where with the new Lieutenant Governor, Longden. Longden did not believe it necessary to establish a garrison in

Corozal (his Brigadier General assuring him that existing frontier defenses were adequate). He could not permit that "armed bands... enter the British Territory in pursuit of their enemies..." And he was scandalized by Carmichael Jr.'s report on his discussions at Santa Cruz:

> I am glad to say that Mr. J. Carmichael [Jr.] does not appear to have had any commission or authority whatever from Lieutenant Governor Austin, but to have gone to Santa Cruz entirely on his own or his father's business. Yet his language throughout his letter unavoidably raises a presumption that he considered himself, or allowed the Indian to consider him a kind of agent of the English Government.

Concerning the question of annexing rebel territory,

> Now I apprehend that the mere discussion of such an utterly inadmissible proposition by anyone supposed to be an agent of the English Government might be productive of a good deal of mischief, especially if it led to the Indians to suppose that they might rely on British protection.

Of course, Carmichael too wanted to know if he could rely on British protection. The answer appeared to be no. The Lieutenant Governor denied that Carmichael had any authorization to negotiate with Santa Cruz (he was, of course, mistaken). He held that "under all the circumstances I propose to avoid as far as possible having any formal arrangements or understandings with the Indians". And most troubling for Carmichael's future, the new executive believed that "there will probably always be a succession of petty quarrels on the frontier" and that frontier depredations were fundamentally minor affairs.[114]

Decades earlier in the Mosquito territory, Carmichael had once been encouraged to develop economic interest in an exposed frontier position by the most local representatives of English authority and power, only to find that official support diminished, muddled, or withdrawn altogether with changes in administrative personnel. That, because there was no well-defined British policy on such territorial and colonial issues in Central America. The consequences for Carmichael in Spanish Honduras had been disastrous. Now, in British Honduras, a change in administration and ignorance or repudiation of previous, semi-private understandings were putting Carmichael in jeopardy again.

[114] James Longden to Governor J.P. Grant, 28 November 1867, AB, r. 93.

Carmichael's Decline

Under different circumstances the visit of Carmichael's son to Santa Cruz could have marked the beginning of a new prominence for Carmichael in colonial affairs. Instead, after that visit, little went right for him again.

In December of that year a small Santa Cruz force headed by a commander, Isidoro Aké, resident in the river-side village of Ramonal crossed into British territory to round up deserters. Santa Cruz detachments had been rounding up small groups of people from the frontier villages of British Honduras for months by then. Some of those sought had evaded military service with the rebels. Others were suspected of aiding the Icaiche. Still others might simply have owed money to one or another rebel leader. From October through December alone they had led off to the rebel side of the river 65 men and women (most with Maya surnames), though forty-seven of those had managed to return to the English side.[115]

On instructions from Poot in Santa Cruz, Isidoro Aké sought permission from Carmichael to take some prisoners —military deserters— back to the rebel side of the river. Why they sought Carmichael's permission this time —after having already marched off dozens— is not clear. It may be they were aware that the Magistrate of the Northern District was going to try to stop them. As Carmichael was still the "English Commissioner" to Santa Cruz, he was an official force apparently equal, and they knew contrary to, the Magistrate Adolphus.

Carmichael later claimed he told Aké he could not forcibly remove their deserters from British territory, anymore than Santa Cruz would allow the Englishmen forcibly to retrieve from rebel territory people who had fled there (like the Chinese laborers?). They seemed to accept that refusal, but were soon found to be removing at least four deserters anyway. That is when Adolphus, the Magistrate of the Northern District, stepped in. Under the previous Lieutenant Governor, when it concerned relations with the rebel Maya, Adolphus had to take a back seat to Carmichael. He arrested the rebel *comandante* Isidoro Aké, and at least one other of his party, and he informed the Lieutenant Governor that

[115] Concerning the number of men and women taken during the months in question, see "List of persons taken across the Río Hondo by the Santa Cruz Indians" [no date, but covers only up to December 1867], AB, r. 97. That some were taken on suspicion of aiding the Icaiche comes from the case of Casimiro Melendez, recounted in Edwin Adolphus, Magistrate of the Northern District, Corozal, to H. Hamlin, Colonial Secretary, Belize City, 25 February 1868, AB, r. 97. As for rounding up deserters, see below.

Carmichael had invited these armed Indians into British territory and permitted them to seize residents against their will. In response, the Lieutenant Governor publicly revoked Carmichael's commission as an official negotiator between British Honduras and the Santa Cruz Indians.

It was a muddled affair all around. One of the prisoners whom Aké was supposedly forcibly removing from British territory was his own *compadre* who might actually have been returning of his own free will (if not happily).[116] Aké had been sent to collect deserters for deployment in an upcoming attack on Icaiché itself, a mission of which the English would surely approve.[117] Some witnesses testified that Aké told them he was taking people away on orders, or with the permission of, John Carmichael, though Carmichael vigorously denied having given such permission. Carmichael claimed he had, on the contrary, informed Aké that he could not take people away with him, though witnesses established that even as Carmichael spoke with Aké, a prisoner was being held right outside Carmichael's door.

The dispute brought clearly to the fore the fact that Carmichael's privileged status as commissioner was over. The Magistrate of the Northern District, Edwin Adolphus, no longer cowed by Carmichael, now enjoyed the ear of the Lieutenant Governor. The Lieutenant Governor, convinced by the Magistrate and unfavorable anyway to the Santa Cruz policy of his predecessor, accused Carmichael of having exceeded the limits of his commission, and the Lieutenant Governor publicly dismissed Carmichael. In his defense, in addition to denying any wrongdoing in the Aké affair, Carmichael accused the Magistrate of acting out of personal malice. In any event, Carmichael implored the Lieutenant Governor to reinstate his commission, the public withdrawal of the commission having harmed his standing with the Indians. According to Carmichael,

> I think it right Your Excellency should be informed, that in their country, as any intelligent Yucatec will inform Your Excellency, the Indians recognise as almost superior to local or municipal authority, the power and rights vested in the seigneurie or right of land. And from the commencement of my residence in Corozal, knowing the large extent of land which belongs to me, they were in the habit of coming to seek advice from me on many different subjects, and in many instances protection from the oppressive acts of Mr.

[116] Declaration of Antonio Batun, Corozal, 1 February 1868, AB, r. 97.

[117] Bonifacio Novelo, Bernadino Cen, and Crescencio Poot, Santa Cruz, to Lieutenant Governor of British Honduras, 9 January [actually February] 1868, AB, r. 97.

> Adolphus. I therefore leave it to Your Excellency to imagine the effect produced in the minds of these ignorant people, who naturally look up to me as their protector, when they learned that Your Excellency had preferred a charge against me almost amounting to treason, and in consequence had publicly dismissed me from my official position as Commissioner.

Carmichael feared as well that his standing with his tenants would be similarly diminished, with predictable economic consequences, as "the tenants being of a migratory disposition much depends upon the relations existing between landlord and tenant". So Carmichael proposed that the Lieutenant Governor reinstate him as official commissioner, which post Carmichael would then voluntarily relinquish.[118]

It is not clear whether the Lieutenant Governor acceded to Carmichael's wishes. In any event, Carmichael ceased to be the official commissioner. Aké and his men were soon released and sent back to the rebel territory. (Santa Cruz did attack Icaiché that December as they had claimed they were preparing to do.)[119] Unchastened by the Aké affair, the next time the rebel Maya came to round up their deserters, they would not seek permission from Carmichael or anyone else.

Deposed as the official commissioner to Santa Cruz, Carmichael did not abandon all hope of influencing policy and practice towards the rebel Indians on the frontier. In February of 1868 his son returned to Santa Cruz on a trading expedition, apparently bringing with him only non-military goods. He may have already gone there a few times since his first visit back in October. Since on this occasion he sought the Lieutenant Governor's permission for "my usual escort of armed Indians here. Not only to protect any specie or produce I may have, but also to protect my life from a gang of Spaniards here who watch for my return for the purpose of robbery and assassination in the River Hondo and on English territory".[120]

[118] The entire Aké affair is well described in Dumond (1997, 298-300). Dumond is not definitive in his judgment of Carmichael's involvement. It seems to me unlikely that Carmichael really new that prisoners were being taken, or that he had authorized or encouraged the act, so ill-disposed as he was to any acts that might spook his tenants and the residents of the Northern District. The Carmichael quote comes from John Carmichael Sr. to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 14 February 1868, AB, r. 97.

[119] The only evidence of the attack comes, alas, from Carmichael himself, who claimed that Santa Cruz killed 76 there. See John Carmichael Sr. to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 14 February 1868, AB, r. 97.

[120] I infer he carried no munitions for sale, since in this letter he goes on to ask whether upon his return from Santa Cruz he can get a permit to ship powder directly from Belize

Carmichael's son was back in Santa Cruz in April. Though evidently trading expeditions, these trips help keep alive the Carmichael's' special influence among the rebel Indians, one which they were still loath to share with the Magistrate of the Northern District. For some time they had effectively managed to cut Adolphus off from contact with Santa Cruz, the leaders of Santa Cruz declining to even answer communications from the Magistrate of the Northern District.[121] Upon returning from his April trip to Santa Cruz, Carmichael Jr. tried to intimidate the Magistrate against developing his own channels of communication to Santa Cruz. As he explained it,

> Having just returned from Santa Cruz, I beg to inform you that the Chiefs of Santa Cruz have given orders to the Commandant at Bacalar to receive no letters whatsoever, unless delivered by myself, in consequence of a number of forged letters having been sent to them calculated to provoke animosity between the English and themselves. I think it right to mention this to you as I am apprehensive that harm might happen to any messenger now dispatched to Bacalar with letters.[122]

This letter was surely "for the record", as the two men must frequently have passed each other in the very streets of Corozal. But Adolphus continued to use his own couriers, also approved by the rebels, for his attempts to communicate with Santa Cruz.[123] That the Carmichael's could not put him off might have been because soon after writing to Adolphus, Carmichael Jr. had precipitously to abandon the British colony.

City. John Carmichael Jr., Captain Royal British Honduras Militia, Corozal, to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 4 February 1868, AB, r. 95. In the wake of the Aké affair it must have seemed to him prudent to get official permission for the entry to British territory of armed rebels —i.e. his "usual" escorts.

[121] Adolphus had tried several times to get Santa Cruz to respond to his requests that the Chinese laborers be returned. As Adolphus explained it two years later, "If I remember rightly my last communication to the chiefs regarding the Chinese was in March or April 1867, but this, like the others, met with no response. In fact, they never answered my letters, though at the time in frequent communication with the owner of Corozal [i.e. Carmichael Sr.]". Edwin Adolphus to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 30 September 1869, AB, r. 105.

[122] John Carmichael Jr. to Edwin Adolphus, 1 May 1868, AB, r. 97.

[123] As Adolphus explained in a later letter to the Lieutenant Governor, "I would have no difficulty in communicating with them [i.e. Santa Cruz] should your Excellency desire it, for there is a man, José María Chan by name, at Sajomal, whom Albino Aké [rebel commander at Bacalar] last year [i.e. 1868] selected to carry all letters from me to Bacalar". Edwin Adolphus to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 30 September 1869, AB, r. 105.

Carmichael Jr. had returned from his April trip to Santa Cruz carrying $1 355 that the rebel leaders had given him to buy gunpowder.[124] Soon after his return to Corozal, however, Carmichael Jr. was robbed by some of his father's Chinese laborers. The robbery was soon discovered and a number of Chinese arrested, along with a local man who, among other things, dabbled in gold and currency exchange and who had come into possession of some of the stolen money.

Though the robbery was quickly discovered and the culprits captured, John Carmichael Jr. evidently felt it wise to flee the colony altogether. Whether he was himself making off with some of the Santa Cruz money, or whether he simply feared what Santa Cruz might do if they did not get their powder, that is not clear. In any event, he was gone and his father was left to clean up the mess as best he could.

That proved not to be so easy. Though from the accused Chinese and the money-changer police had confiscated almost a thousand dollars, and though they was good reason to presume that money belonged to Santa Cruz, authorities would not release any of the money until the accused had been tried in court. If they were found guilty, the money would be returned to Carmichael. If they were found innocent, Carmichael was told, he would have to sue for the money through normal legal channels. As the case dragged on through the summer and into the fall, meanwhile, the Santa Cruz leaders became increasingly impatient to receive either their money or their gunpowder.

Writing to the Acting Attorney General of the colony in September, Carmichael had occasion to thank him for efforts already made to get the Santa Cruz money back. Those efforts had yielded little, however. Carmichael desperately sought that the colonial treasury at least loan him part of the money —about $850— until the case was settled. He could make up the difference, but he claimed, he could not himself come up with the entire sum due Santa Cruz. In trying to persuade the Attorney General to act quickly, Carmichael had occasion to note that though he would be losing money in this whole affair, he would prefer to do that rather

> than to irritate the Indians —personally I do not fear them— but they threaten reprisals and who is to stop them? They can enter Corozal and with impunity

[124] The Magistrate Adolphus believed that the sum was $1 500. (Edwin Adolphus to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 11 July 1868, Archives of Belize, r. 102.) However Carmichael Sr. stated that it was $1 355 (John Carmichael Sr. to Acting Attorney General Cockburn, 12 September 1868, AB, r. 101).

> levy black mail. Now it is a question of policy with the Governor. Whether a point is strained to pay me the money or resist an attempt by the Indians to make reprisals and take away hostages until the money is paid.[125]

Carmichael tried again later that month to move the Attorney General to free up the money that Santa Cruz was demanding.

> As I said before and now repeat, if I get possession of the stolen money, I will execute the [Santa Cruz] commission in full, making up all deficiencies. But if this money is not paid to me, then most certainly I shall decline doing anything at all and will refer the Santa Cruz Indians to His Excellency Mr. Longden. Although at the risk of being taken away as a hostage until His Excellency orders the money to be paid. I doubt the return of my son John, so the thing had better be looked in the face at once. The detention of the money by the Police on the Court is likely to cost the Colony a *large sum* of money and I can see will be the ruin of Corozal —owning to the inhabitants clearing out. What a misfortune for my family.[126]

As late as October the Lieutenant Governor was being advised that the money could not be returned until the case was settled.[127] Though no friend of Carmichael, the Magistrate of the Northern District added his voice to the chorus of alarm being raised.

> I hear from more than one person of credibility that Aké [Albino Aké, the rebel commander of Bacalar, not Isidro Aké mentioned earlier] and some of his men, when here last, had been heard to say that if they didn't get the money or powder on their return in November that they would take our very esteemed friend Don Juan. And he again, it has been mentioned, has been heard to say that he [Carmichael] wouldn't go alone, referring no doubt to me. I always anticipated that ill would some day arise from the relations of Mr. Carmichael and his worthy son were allowed to hold with the Indians.[128]

The point, it seems, got through to authorities in Belize City. The largest part of the stolen money was sent back to Corozal, though the trial

[125] John Carmichael Sr. to Acting Attorney General Cockburn, 12 September 1868, AB, r. 101.
[126] John Carmichael Sr. to Acting Attorney General Cockburn, 29 September 1868, AB, r. 101.
[127] Unknown author [illegible], to Lieutenant Governor, 8 October 1868, AB, r. 102.
[128] Edwin Adolphus to Acting Attorney General Cockburn 19 October 1868, AB, r. 102.

of the thieves had yet to take place.[129] Carmichael presumably executed the purchase of munitions for Santa Cruz, and with that the crisis was defused.[130]

Something had again changed, however, in relations between Santa Cruz and the British colony. The English noted that the rebel Indians were ever more frequently visiting the Corozal area carrying their weapons, and authorities thought they noted a boldness or assertiveness among the rebel Indians that harked back to more dangerous times years before. The rebel Maya of Santa Cruz were at the apogee of their power. They had successfully encouraged and supported a devastating uprising among the former *pacíficos* of the Chenes and now enjoyed the support of four thousand armed allies there. In July of 1869 they launched a major raid deep into Yucatecan territory towards Izamal, announcing then their intention to return and take Mérida itself. Perhaps most consequential, by early 1869 one member of the triumvirate that had ruled Santa Cruz for the past five years, Bonifacio Novelo, patron of the church, was dead. The two surviving members, Bernadino Cen and Crescencio Poot, were war-leaders, commanders of troops, and troubled relations between the two were played out, partly, in bellicose language and acts towards foes and sometimes friends, like the English of British Honduras.[131]

Booty from the Maya raid towards Izamal in July —60 or so head of cattle— appeared in Corozal the following month.[132] General Cen himself

[129] Edwin Adolphus, Magistrate of the Northern District, Corozal, to [?], 16 October 1868, AB, r. 102. Adolphus acknowledges that a Sergeant Taylor arrived bring $614 of the stolen funds.

[130] I have no direct evidence that he did so, though that was the plan and I assume from the absence of any further mention of the issue that he carried it out. Years later the trial of the accused thieves occasioned some controversy that is difficult to decipher. In September of 1868 Carmichael informed the Attorney General that he was not yet ready to go to trial —i.e. to present witnesses against the accused. The accused Chinese went to trial in November of that year and were all found not guilty, because no evidence was presented against them and no prosecutor spoke against them, though evidently the accused money-changer was found guilty of having received stolen goods. When an inquest into the matter was held in 1872, almost all the records of the case were missing. See the report of John Bristowe, William Henry Dilles, and Robert Hume, Belize City, to the Colonial Secretary, 5 August 1872; and Edwin Adolphus to Captain Mitchell, 2 July 1872, both from AB, r. 101.

[131] Evidence for the rivalry of Cen and Poot and the destabilizing of Santa Cruz leadership with the demise of Bonifacio Novelo is reviewed in my article, "La vida y muerte de Bernadino Cen", published by Universidad de Quintana Roo, Chetumal, 1998.

[132] "El Ex-Coronel José Antonio Muñoz (a) El Chelo", *La Razón del Pueblo*, vol. 3, no. 326, 4 October 1869, p. 4.

showed up in Corozal in September. Cen and his escort had come to make purchases, and though they gave no cause for offense during their three days there, British authorities became concerned. As the Lieutenant Governor reported to his superior in Jamaica,

> the Indians seemed upon this occasion to have exhibited an insolence of conduct and language which remains to be checked. On leaving, the chief [i.e. Cen] announced his intention to visit Corozal again at Christmas for the purpose of making more purchases, and a general feeling of uneasiness has prevailed in consequence. I have no reason whatever to attribute any unfriendly or hostile intentions to the Indians. But between the distrust and suspicion of the inhabitants of Corozal on the one hand and the careless insolence of the Indians on the other, causes of quarrel may easily arise which it would not be within the power of the Municipal Police... to quell.

Adding to the unease on the frontier was a report, derived from a former rebel commander, that upon his return to the colony Cen would seize from a frontier settlement all the Indians who had fled there from rebel territory.[133]

Even before Cen's expected Christmastime return, Corozal inhabitants were agitated by the seizure in another frontier settlement of a man and his wife, both of who were taken directly to Santa Cruz. The man was promptly executed. Rumors circulated in Corozal that the Magistrate of the Northern District had been advised by Santa Cruz that the rebels would next come to Corozal itself to seize several people there "who they believe have written against them to the Mexican Government and have otherwise given them annoyance". Concerned citizens of the town petitioned the Lieutenant Governor to bolster the military presence there. And in terms that John Carmichael himself could once have penned (though he was not among the signatories of this petition), they illuminated the consequences of further disruptions in the district. Labourers would, they explained, be seized with panic, and "the customary Christmas profits hitherto enjoyed by our merchants and shopkeepers will have entirely to be foregone as in the present aspect of affairs. In lieu of proceeding to Belize to make their usual purchases for the approaching season, they are forced into a consideration of how they

[133] Lieutenant Governor Longden, Belize City, to Governor Grant, Jamaica, 13 November 1869, AB, r. 98.

are to protect themselves and families".[134] Yet another report, this one from the Magistrate himself, alleged that in a drunken rage fueled by the death of a favorite daughter, General Cen ordered the destruction of a frontier settlement (the same from which a seizure had been made back in November). However, an important rebel commander had succeeded in having that order rescinded.[135]

In response to the growing tension the Lieutenant Governor did permit a small reinforcement of security forces in Corozal. But neither he nor the Magistrate appeared to have the tact or will to work things out with the leaders of Santa Cruz. While Lieutenant Governor Austin had no qualms about treating Santa Cruz as the *de facto* government of rebel territory, Longden would no go that far. In his opinion, "it would be very injurious for the Lieutenant Governor of this colony to have any understanding or agreement whatever, of an official character, with unrecognized barbarians, in whom no reasonable man can place any confidence..."[136] For the Magistrate of the Northern District, the source of these problems was principally that residents of the colony cultivated land in rebel territory (presumably paying rent). To eliminate the irritation, the Magistrate would forbid such cultivation, a measure that would surely have displeased both the cultivators and their landlords, the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz. Further, the Magistrate spared no opportunity to obliquely blame Carmichael for the current state of affairs.

> And what I regard again as leading to most mischievous consequences is the sufferance of the Indians to enter our towns and villages armed. It never was done until some three years back, when some six or seven arrived fully accoutered in Indian fashion. I looked on it with much dislike, foreseeing

[134] Concerning the seizure of José Monte and his wife, and Monte's execution in Santa Cruz, see Declaration of Ramon Lisama before Edwin Adolphus, Corozal, 26 November 1869, and Edwin Adolphus to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 1 December 1869, both AB, r. 105. The above-mentioned petition of the inhabitants of Corozal is "Inhabitants of the town of Corozal" to Lieutenant Governor Longden, received 24 November 1869, AB, r. 98. It is not certain why Monte was seized. Lisama said it was for having insulted a rebel Maya sergeant, though Monte also farmed land on the rebel side and may have owed them money.

[135] Edwin Adolphus to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 1 December 1869, AB, r. 105.

[136] Lieutenant Governor Longden to Governor Grant, Jamaica, 29 January 1870, AB, r. 98. That was Longden's response to news that one of the Santa Cruz leaders, Crescencio Poot, wished to come to Belize to speak with the Lieutenant Governor, something that the previous Lieutenant Governor had so anxiously sought in vain.

> what it would, in all likelihood, eventually lead to. But the Lieutenant Governor [i.e. Austin] in his anxiety to come to a proper understanding with the Sta. Cruz Indians, had commissioned a certain gentleman [i.e. Carmichael] here to treat and confer with them etc. And as that gentleman lodged them in a Building adjoining his own house and entertained them right well, I was forced to believe it was only in pursuance of a policy just initiated.

So the Magistrate made the foolhardy proposal that they once again stop all trade with the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz, noting in a communication fortunately ignored by the Lieutenant Governor that

> The stoppage of all trade with the Sta. Cruz Indians in 1861 was most severely felt by them. For salt is always in as great requisition by them as gunpowder; and a renewal of such a step, if Your Excellency will pardon the suggestion, would, I am fully satisfied, bring them to their senses. This, however, could not of course be carried out unless there were means to repel aggression, should the same be attempted.[137]

While the Magistrate and Lieutenant Governor were at least privately talking tough, some official thought it wise to turn to Carmichael for help with Santa Cruz. Carmichael was asked to join with two other major landowners of the Corozal district as a kind of commission to talk with the Santa Cruz leaders and ease tensions along the border. In a letter to the Acting Attorney General of the colony, Carmichael refused, surely with the humiliation of his prior dismissal in mind. "I will only act alone", he wrote, "and by authority of the Lieutenant Governor if he thinks proper to reinstate me in the meantime to calm the fears of the inhabitants". But the Lieutenant Governor was not the man to eat such crow. In any event, Carmichael did report that he had already privately taken steps to calm the situation. He had written on his own initiative to the leaders of Santa Cruz and to the rebel commandant of Bacalar, and he had made that fact known to people around Corozal. In Carmichael's estimation that had already somewhat calmed their fears, though he was not sure how things would go with Santa Cruz.

> I think my communication sent to Santa Cruz will have the desired effect. I sincerely hope it may, although there is a risk, as the chiefs have been told to

[137] Edwin Adolphus to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 1 December 1869, AB, r. 105.

> hold no communication with us —and the last Indians (armed) who visited us were expressing their regret that I no longer acted— as with me they found board and lodging and I took charge of their arms. It is hard on the Indians that people residing here on the Banda Inglés [the English side of the Río Hondo] should with impunity trespass on their lands.

Meanwhile Carmichael noted, as if to further gloat, while the panic might result in the "ruin of the Northern District" and while the "Xmas fiesta will be a failure", in some way the panic benefited him. Most recently he had lost one laborer fled, but he had picked up four or five others, workers who had fled other estates and sought shelter with Carmichael, "for the reason I believe that they consider themselves safe on this estate".[138]

To calm the situation in the Northern District, it helped in no small measure that Carmichael agreed to serve as the collection-agent for Santa Cruz. Rather than having Santa Cruz soldiers coming into British territory to dun farmers behind on their rent for plots of land cultivated in rebel territory, Carmichael would collect the funds for the rebel landlords. So, while Carmichael was unwilling to resume his role as mediator between the English and the rebel Maya (except under terms the Lieutenant Governor was not going to accept), he moved closer to serving privately as an agent for the rebels in the colony.

The arrangement might have worked well over time, and Carmichael and the other landlords of the Northern District might finally have enjoyed the tranquillity they considered essential for the productive use of their properties. Had they forgotten, however, about the Icaiche? The Icaiche had suffered significant losses to Santa Cruz attacks, and the Chenes region to which Icaiche was at one time nominally linked had gone up in flames between 1867 and 1869. But Icaiche was not yet beaten, and they remained agitated by the support Carmichael and others lent to the rebel Maya of Santa Cruz.

In April 1870 a force of over a hundred Icaiche soldiers led by Marcos Canul and Rafael Chan crossed into British territory, marched across the Northern District, and occupied Corozal. The invaders had little time to do much harm, as calls for relief quickly went out to Belize City and to the

[138] John Carmichael, San Andrés, to Acting Attorney General Cocburn, 8 December 1869, AB, r. 101. I have found no other evidence concerning the aborted commission, nor is it clear who made the proposal to Carmichael.

rebel Maya commander at Bacalar, both of whom dispatched troops in response. While Carmichael, other threatened residents, and a small British force barricaded themselves in a sea-side redoubt, Canul issued a demand for three thousand dollars, a fine of sorts for the aid Corozal had given Santa Cruz. (One source indicates that it was precisely Carmichael who was being "fined".)[139] Some bargaining apparently ensued, as the demand was lowered to one thousand dollars. But before they could collect even that, Canul and his men abandoned the town, fearful of the approach of British troops from one side and Santa Cruz soldiers from the other. As those relief forces were arriving in Corozal (including about 100 rebel Maya soldiers from Bacalar), Canul was crossing back out of British territory.

Though bloodless and brief, this was the raid that Carmichael had long feared and labored to avoid a kind of replay of his disaster on the Mosquito Coast decades earlier. As Canul and his men had approached Corozal, estate laborers and tenants fled left and right, abandoning the preparation of cane fields and corn fields and making it difficult or unlikely that landlords like Carmichael could collect rents due. Similarly, merchants in Corozal found their buying public dispersed to other parts of the colony, leaving wares unsold and unsaleable on their store shelves. What is more, it was expected that the severe panic, however transitory, would depress real-estate values, it having been demonstrated once again, and most conclusively, that the English could not or would not provide a timely, effective defense of the District.

As he had done on the Mosquito Coast, Carmichael promptly sought reparations. From just whom was not clear, as he faulted both the Indians and his own government. In this ten other of the major landowners and merchants claiming to have been grievously effected by the invasion joined him. Echoing language Carmichael had used to press his

[139] "The Humble Memorial of Richard John Downer, Additional Paid Magistrate of the North Western District of British Honduras, to the Right Honourable the Earl of Kimberly, Her Majesty's Principal Secretary of State for the Colonies", AB, r. 111. (No date, by an accompanying cover letter was dated 16 December 1872.) A month after his incursion, Canul sent a terse communication to the Lieutenant Governor of British Honduras providing a list of Santa Cruz allies and supporters in Corozal, asking the English authority to remedy that situation. If he failed to do so, Canul threatened, he would take other measures. Heading Canul's blacklist was John Carmichael. (Marcos Canul, General en Jefe, República Mexicana, Estado de Campeche, Línea del Sur, to Governor [sic.] of Belize, 4 May 1870, AB, r. 106.)

Mosquito claim. The claimants noted that it was "in full and perfect reliance upon the integrity of the Laws and institutions of the Colony and confidently believing in the power as well as the will of the Government to protect life and property within its limits". That they once did "invest their capital and most of them permanently settled with their families in the said Northern District. And up to a recent period enjoyed comparative prosperity and repose", while their estates promised in the way of gain "all that the most sanguine of colonists might reasonably anticipate". As long as the colonial government had maintained a garrison in Corozal, they were secure in the development of their properties. When that garrison was withdrawn, however,

> a feeling of insecurity was engendered —culminated at last, after repeated acts of insolent and daring defiance of our Laws, and contemptuous indifference to our remonstrance by the Santa Cruz Indians who are professedly our very good friends and allies— into a gloomy and settled conviction on the minds of inhabitants that neither life nor property are safe in any part of the Northern District.

The claimants stated that for months rumors had circulated of an Icaiche invasion and those rumors had been repeatedly brought to the attention of authorities in Belize City. But no reinforcements had been sent, leaving them "absolutely at the mercy of the numerous and well armed tribes of hostile or doubtfully affected Indians known to be hovering about our frontiers".

It seems that the claimants aimed their most pointed criticisms at their own government, no doubt because it would only be from their government that they might hope to get any compensation at all. But they opened the door to pursuing a claim against Mexico, as well, noting that Canul and his men claimed to act under the authority of the Mexican government.

Carmichael claimed losses of $66 000 from the Icaiche incursion. About $16 000 of that was lost rents (both rents due and rents that would have become due had tenants continued to occupy Carmichael's properties) and (in small measure) uncollectable debts from laborers. Only $3 600 was claimed directly for agricultural losses —crops not planted. The largest item on Carmichael's list, and surely the most difficult to quantify, was $28 000 claimed for depreciation in the "real property" of 14 sugar estates. That is to say, Carmichael anticipated that after the

Icaiche demonstration of the vulnerability of the Northern District, if he tried to sell his properties he would not receive as good a price as he would have gotten before the Icaiche intrusion.

Only one other claimant alleged even greater damage. The Kindred & Co., owner of the Caledonia Estate, estimated their losses at $74 000, two-thirds of that total in depreciation of real-estate values. Their list of losses included the interesting item: "Loss incurred owing to increase of wages; labourers refusing to work at former rates, under the present feeling of insecurity", which the company estimated at $4 200. Otherwise most of the claimants alleged damages of around $6 000 or less.[140]

It is not clear whether Carmichael or the others collected anything from this new claim. Probably they did not. It appears however that around this time Carmichael, while aware that the Icaiche still planned to do something about him, gave up on expecting effective protection from English forces. Instead he sought privately to enlist armed support from the rebel Maya themselves. In a somewhat cryptic August 1870 communication to the Patron and Patroness of the miraculous crosses of Tulum, Carmichael renewed a request he had earlier made for 50 men to be placed at his disposal when he needed them, "the day I need them, I want to know if yes or no". Meanwhile, Carmichael forwarded to them a small quantity of large-grain gunpowder, appropriate for cannons (Tulum had none) or rockets, or more likely, signal bombs. Tulum had evidently sent in a request for the same and had an account with Carmichael for such purchases.[141]

Why did Carmichael want 50 men from Tulum? Neither as porters nor as escorts for a shipment to Tulum, I expect. The number is excessive, and besides, Tulum was accessible by boat from British Honduras.

Perhaps Carmichael wanted them as laborers on his estate. By the 1870s, if not earlier, Carmichael reportedly deployed many rebel soldiers as part-time laborers on his estates (Dumond, 1997, 314). Accord-

[140] "The Memorial of John Carmichael, Andrew Hall, Stewart Carter, William John Jones, and others whose names are attached hereto, to His Excellency Charles Buller Hugh Mitchell Esquire, Administrator of the Government of British Honduras and to the Honorable the Executive Council of the said Colony", AB, r. 106. The main text of the memorial is undated; part parts of the memorial are dated May 1870.

[141] John Carmichael, San Andrés, to Inocente Chablé and María Uicab, Patron and Patroness of the Cross, Tulum, 10 August 1870, published in *La Razón del Pueblo*, vol. 5, no. 536, 1 March 1871, p. 3. What was published was only a Spanish translation of a Maya original. I have not seen the Maya original.

ing to a report on labor conditions in the Northern District authored by Magistrate Adolphus back in January, planters there preferred Indian to Creole or Black Carib laborers. Indians were paid by the task, while others were paid by month of service, and they received proportionately less than other laborers. Indian laborers required less food, were reputed to "finish their work in a better style than the other laborers", and were more "tractable and obedient" than their Creole or Carib counterparts. The disadvantage of Indian labourers, all of whom (like all labourers, according to Adolphus) commenced each year in debt to their employer, was that they could escape their debts, mistreatment, or official sanction, by crossing to the rebel Maya side of the Río Hondo: "where the Indian Commandants gladly receive them, and where they have rich ground for cultivation freely granted them on rendering when called upon their services for raids against the unprotected towns and villages of Yucatán, or for fights with the Icaiches, their inveterate enemies." One imagines, however, that of all planters Carmichael had the least problem with runaways, having as he did such frequent dealings with the "Indian Commandants".[142]

Yet Carmichael was probably not seeking laborers from Tulum. Why seek them from Tulum, when part-time laborers from the rebel side, if needed, could be had from the garrison at Bacalar, much closer than Tulum? Carmichael's letter, though cryptic, suggests an urgency and a use for the men unrelated to agricultural tasks —"por ver si se me puede dar un auxilio de cincuenta hombres, hasta ahora no me han contestado nada; el día que los necesite, quiero saber si sí, ó nó" ("to see if you could give me the assistance of fifty men, up to now you have not answered me; the day I need them, I want to know whether yes or no").

Even as Carmichael made his request for, I believe, military assistance from Tulum, should the Icaiche take further action against him, Santa Cruz was beginning to draw upon the growing military strength of villages and garrisons in the Tulum area. Those coastal regions that had for long been only tenuously under the authority of Santa Cruz were beginning to align themselves more to the military command of Generals Cen and Poot, even as the highest religious authority in rebel territory rested no longer in Santa Cruz, but in Tulum.

There is no evidence that Carmichael got the commitment he sought from Tulum. Perhaps he did. But his timing was bad. In December of

[142] Edwin Adolphus to Lieutenant Governor Longden, 15 January 1870, AB, r. 105.

that year a combined Santa Cruz-Tulum raiding party suffered heavy losses during a raid on the Yucatecan frontier, to the evident annoyance of the Patron and Patroness of Tulum. Three months later Yucatecans made a rare and daring raid down the east coast of the peninsula, burning Tulum and capturing the son and secretary of the Patroness or, as they called her, Queen of Tulum. Tulum would not soon be in condition to provide assistance on the distant frontier of British Honduras.

Exit Carmichael

Though he looked forward to a very sizable sugar crop in 1872, Carmichael could not work out from a burden of debt carried since the early 1860s. In March 1872 he notified his creditors that he was giving up. The mortgagees could foreclose on his properties, if they wished (Cal, 1984, 43).

Carmichael returned to England no later than June 1873, perhaps his first trip home since fleeing his creditors back in 1858. The years of separation had evidently estranged him from his wife —they appear to have lived apart in London— he in St. John's Wood, she in South Hampstead. Just three months after his return, Carmichael died at the age of 69. He was buried back in Birkenhead, in the same grave containing the remains of his late mother-in-law, Jessie Hutchinson. That was probably the will of his daughter, Jessie Carmichael Laird, named after Jessie Hutchinson, the only member of the family still residing in Birkenhead.[143]

If Carmichael's life goal was to accumulate wealth, then at the end he could hardly have thought himself successful. His estate, which went entirely to his widow, was valued at under 450 pounds when his will was probated in October 1876.[144] Angel Cal's examination of records of the Schofield Estate (the Schofield's eventually acquired ownership

[143] Carmichael, who died on 7 August 1873, in London, was buried on 11 August 1873 in Saint Mary's Cemetery in Birkenhead. That information, along with the detail that he was buried in his mother-in-law's grave, comes from an inventory of graves conducted by the Merseyside Archaeological Society prior to the removal or paving over of all those graves in the late 1970s. I am grateful to Michael Watts for passing on to me the relevant documentation obtained Pauline Black, Senior Assistant Librarian, Birkenhead Central Library.

[144] My thanks to Dr. Michael Watts of Cheshire, England, for obtaining for me copies of the wills of John Carmichael and Sarah Ann Carmichael, the former probated 11 October 1876, the latter, 30 July 1897, at the Principal Registry.

of Carmichael's properties in the Northern District) suggests that Carmichael's wife continued to possess a financial interest in Corozal and Pembroke Hall until 1878. She appears to have eventually received $5 000 for the properties (Cal, 1984, 43). As important as that sum may have been, it was a far cry from the wealth Carmichael once enjoyed, albeit never truly clear of debt.

The money and property Carmichael left behind tell only part of the story, however. When he fled financial disaster in England in 1858, he left behind a wife and nine children. While he year after year staved off foreclosure on his property around Corozal in British Honduras, he evidently generated a flow of capital adequate to support a fine lifestyle for the family back in England and, more strikingly, superior education for many of his children. His daughter Mary, for example, studied at Aix-la-Chapelle, in Bonn, and in Lausanne, and then went on to receive musical training from Ebenezer Prout in London and Heinrich Porges in Munich. She became a Professor of Music and a composer in her own right.[145] Carmichael's son David became a Doctor of Medicine. Carmichael's youngest son, Montgomery, like Mary, studied both in England and on the Continent (Brewood, Bonn, Munich). As a young man he was employed as an insurance clerk in London, but he later entered the British consular service in northern Italy, finishing his career there as Consul-general to the Republic of San Marino and Consul for Tuscany, Umbra and the Marches during the First World War. He married the daughter of a prominent London publisher and he authored ten books and numerous articles, many of them on religious sites and personages.[146]

Carmichael's wife lived on in relative comfort in London. When enumerated for the 1881 census several of her children still resided with her: Mary, the Professor of Music; Frances, then a government clerk; Montgomery; and a grandson studying art. Her other daughters had all left the house, one to Denmark, another to California and another who had married into the Laird family of Liverpool shipbuilders. Carmichael's wife, then 66, kept several boarders, though a live-in Scottish cook and German housemaid aided her.[147] She evidently more than managed to

[145] My thanks to Michael Watts for finding an entry for Mary Carmichael in *Who's Who*.

[146] Thanks again to Michael Watts for finding an entry for Montgomery Carmichael in *Who's Who*. As for the other children: By 1887 one lived in San Francisco, one was a government clerk in London, one lived in Denmark, daughters all. I do not know the fate of the other sons.

[147] 1881 *Census of England*, Middlesex County, London, Hampstead, page 16 880.

make ends meet over the years after her husband's death, as she continued to enjoy the services of her cook and housemaid until her death, and left her grown children an estate valued at $1 700 pounds.

Such were among the fruits of John Carmichael's labors in Central America —a family firmly ensconced in the middle class, a bevy of well educated and mobile children and grandchildren. These were among the private interests Carmichael had schemed, at times desperately, to advance. And in that he largely succeeded, in no small measure by cajoling and manipulating colonial authorities to adopt policies that would, if not actually advance Carmichael's interests, at least avoid fueling unrest on the colonial frontier until Carmichael could return home to England.

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SOURCES

Archives

AB Archives of Belize
AGEY Archivo General del Estado de Yucatán
NA National Archives of the United States
Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Belize
Despatches from U.S. Consuls in Omoa
PRO Public Records Office, Kew Gardens
FO Foreign Office Records
WO War Office Records

Newspapers and periodicals

La Nueva Época
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The Illustrated London News
The New York Herald
The Times of London

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