

*Extracts of a letter from Mr. Van Buren to Mr. McLane, dated July 20, 1829.*

*First. The trade between the United States and the British American Colonies.* The policy of the United States in relation to their commercial intercourse with other nations is founded on principles of perfect equality and reciprocity. By the adoption of these principles, they have endeavored to relieve themselves from the discussions, discontents, and embarrassments, inseparable from the imposition of burthensome discriminations. These principles were avowed whilst they were yet struggling for their independence, are recorded in their first treaty, and have since been adhered to with the most scrupulous fidelity. In the year 1815, they repealed all their acts imposing discriminating tonnage duties on foreign ships or vessels, and of impost, so far as respected the produce or manufacture of the nations to which such foreign ships or vessels might belong—such repeal to take effect in favor of any foreign nation which should abolish similar duties, so far as they operated to the disadvantage of the United States.

In the year 1817, they restricted the importation into the United States, in foreign vessels, to articles of the growth, produce, or manufacture of the country to which such vessels belonged, or as could only be, or were most usually shipped in the first instance from such country; provided that such regulation should not extend to the vessels of any foreign nation which had not adopted, or should not adopt a similar regulation with regard to them.

In the year 1824, they declared the suspension of all discriminating duties, in relation to the vessels and produce of several European nations, and of their territories in Europe, which had accepted of the terms proffered by the act of 1815, and conferred authority upon the President to extend the same exemption to all nations thereafter complying with its requirements; and in 1828, an act was passed, authorizing the President to extend the exemption in regard to alien duties, which, by the acts of 1815 and 1824, was restricted to the productions of the country to which the vessel belongs, to the productions of any foreign country imported into the United States in the vessels of any nation which would allow a similar exemption in favor of the United States.

The terms proposed by our act of 1815 were adopted in the commercial treaty between the United States and Great Britain in the same year, which has been twice extended, and is now in full force. By it, the commercial intercourse between the United States and the British possessions in Europe is established upon just and equal terms. The United States desired to place their trade with the British American colonies on the same footing. The Government of Great Britain would not then consent to that arrangement, and it was consequently stipulated in the treaty that the intercourse between the United States and His Britannic Majesty's possessions in the West Indies, and on the continent of North America, should not be affected by any of its provisions, and that each party should remain in complete possession of its respective rights with regard to such intercourse. The trade and intercourse between the United States and the British colonies previous to and at that time, were only such as were permitted by British legislation, or regulation by orders in Council. It had always been of a restricted and unequal character, and every previous attempt to place it upon just terms had wholly failed. Since 1815, both Governments have uniformly admitted it to be their belief that a commercial intercourse between the United States and the British colonial possessions referred to, upon terms of fair reciprocity, would promote their mutual interests.