

What the West Indies Produce

The reports issued at the Colonial Office give, in great detail, statistics of exports, imports, etc., of these different possessions, but a resumé of the principal products may be of interest to the reader:—

Bermudas.—Hides, skins, etc.

Bahamas.—Sponge, sisal (hemp), shell, fine woods for furniture, fish, salt, fruit.

Jamaica and Dependencies.—Cocoa, coffee, fruit, ginger, cattle, hides, logwood, rum, sugar, tobacco, fustic, salt, coconut, etc.

Leeward Islands.—Cattle, cocoa, sugar, limes, cotton.

Windward Islands.—Cocoa, cotton, spices, fine woods, etc.

Barbadoes.—Cotton, sugar.

Trinidad and Tobago.—Sugar, cocoa, coconuts, fine woods, asphalt, crude oil. This colony is one of the most prosperous in the group. The establishment of the fact that oil exists in large quantities, coupled with its geographical position on the trade routes between North and South America and the Panama Canal and Europe, would indicate a brilliant future, if only as a fuel station.

British Honduras.—Sugar, rubber, cocoa, mahogany.

British Guiana.—Sugar, fine woods, rice and minerals.

The advantages to the West Indies of federation are equally clear, and, indeed, much more immediate. It will be understood by them that they enter the federation in no sense as colonies or dependencies of Canada, but as partners, and Canada's advancement will be theirs. Instead of a separation of the ties that bind them to England, this step will allow them to show their loyalty in the highest sense of the word. Federation, by placing them in a better position commercially, will enable them to develop their strength and resources, and to become a greater economic asset to the Empire in time of peace and a real bulwark in time of stress. The action of federation will have no effect on the commerce of the West Indies save one, beneficial to supplier and consumer. The foreign companies that have heretofore traded with these colonies have not been impelled to do so because the colonies were governed from England, but because they have been able to dispose of at a profit the commodities furnished. That this condition will be altered prejudicially by federation I cannot see. The introduction of tropical products into Canada free of duty will not prevent their consumption in other countries and must be of advantage to the producer.

That Canada will in time furnish a more proportionate share of manufactured articles and imported foodstuffs to these colonies is certain, but the change will come gradually. The foreign importer will continue to supply the demand until ousted by cheaper goods from domestic sources, that is to say, the manufacturing portion of the Dominion. The percentages of distribution of the imports and exports of the West Indies are approximately as follows:—

	Imports. Per cent.	Exports. Per cent.
United Kingdom	20	45
United States	71	31
Canada	5	12
Other countries	4	12

Considering the imports, federation should not affect greatly the percentage supplied by the United Kingdom, as this, I take it, is largely special machinery and articles that she is in a predominate position to supply. The percentage supplied by "other countries," also probably of a special nature, we can assume will not change to any extent. The remaining percentages, however, cover imports consisting chiefly of articles which Canada is in almost, if not quite, as good a position to supply as the United States. Although the present condition, the disparity of imports, is due largely to the fact that communication between Canada and the West Indies practically ceased after the outbreak of war, this is not the only reason, and the Canadian exporter must pull himself together and realize that if he thinks the West Indian market of small importance, the United States exporter does not. I have good cause for saying this, as I

know of cases where West Indian merchants who have had orders booked by representatives of Canadian firms, later refused, for reasons entirely inadequate or delayed beyond all reason, have been forced to turn to American sources. It is needless to point out how one or two cases of this kind will tend to create a lack of confidence in the whole structure of Canadian business, and our cousins across the line are not slow to take advantage of it.

We all must realize that it is economic law that governs the progress of people. The extra miles of sea that separate the West Indies from the mother country must always act as a deterrent in the establishment of intimate commercial relations. One might argue from this, patriotism apart, that the natural protector of these colonies is the United States. Without enlarging on this side of the question, which, in the West Indies has some support, I beg to differ. The West Indies would have in Canada a market without competition, while the United States have already large tropical possessions from whence keen rivalry would arise. The main interests of these colonies will always be as producers of raw material which has to be transported to the industrial centre. There is not a great deal of difference in the distances from the West Indies to the industrial centre of the United States and the industrial centre of Canada. It is worthy of note that when the deep waterway system of the St. Lawrence is completed both centres possibly may be supplied by the same route. It would be of great advantage to the Dominion to develop the harbor, dock and shipyard facilities of the West Indies, while the United States would have to consider the effect on already existing similar establishments in their own country.

Question of Government

It is suggested that commercial and not political union is what Canada and the West Indies need. I feel sure this is not so. Commercial union means simply reciprocity treaties. To the West Indians these would invite retaliation on the part of other countries, and to Canada would afford no guarantee to justify a settled policy that will be necessary for the full advantage of the union. Trade and commerce must go hand-in-hand with government. To attempt to establish the "head office" of West Indian trade in Canada while the "head office" of West Indian government is in London would surely lead to an infinite number of complications. Manufacturers, importers and exporters should have easy and immediate access to government. Conditions change daily, and what is good to-day may have to be altered to-morrow. Few things are more sensitive than trade and commerce, and, as with a complicated engine, continual adjustments may have to be made. It would appear to be poor policy to have the chief mechanic living thousands of miles away.

With the inclusion of the West Indies in the Dominion of Canada, the forms of government of the former will have to be altered. I do not think that any two of the nine colonies have an exactly similar form of government. While some of the colonies have now a restricted form of representative government, the majority are governed through the Colonial Office by a system of benevolent autocracy. To all of them the form of government they would acquire by federation with Canada would be partly new, to some entirely so. While it would be the policy of the federal government to allow the West Indian province or provinces absolute freedom in their selection of a system of provincial government, it is permitted to us to speculate on what form that would take and its relation to the Dominion parliament and representation.

There are, broadly speaking, two methods of government from which to select. The first, a form of paternal government, either along the lines as now administered by the Colonial Office, or some system such as was accorded to our northwest territories. The second, government by representation through suffrage. The first method has its advantage when we consider the material with which we have to deal. Its disadvantages are many. It is entirely