

In considering the colonies as a grand group, a division into three parts might be made on account of geographical position, origin of lines of travel and lack of inter-colonial traffic. The Bermudas and Bahamas lie to the north in temperate and semi-tropical waters, Jamaica and dependencies, Leeward and Windward Islands, Trinidad and Tobago, and Barbadoes lie to the south of Cuba, and British Honduras and British Guiana are of the mainland of Central and South America. These three divisions, one might say four, as I do not know that the Bermudas and the Bahamas have much in common, differ, to a certain extent, in feeling and thought. That each colony has a distinct government has not made for community feeling in the past, but to-day it is realized by all that, in the development of the future, there is no room for petty jealousies. In this article where the term West Indies is used generally, it is intended to include in its meaning British Guiana, British Honduras, the Bahamas and Bermuda. I believe that the material prosperity and the political welfare of Canada will be incalculably benefited by the federation of the British West Indies with Canada. I will go farther and say that I believe it would be an error of the gravest magnitude on the part of Canadian statesmen should they fail to grasp this opportunity—now, when the time is propitious, as it may never be again—of obtaining so much at a cost of so little. By the inclusion of these colonies in the Canadian confederation Canada will enlarge her sphere of immediate influence to the north-east shore of South America.

Leaving out the Bermudas, which lie to the north, these islands from off the southern coast of Florida extend in a regular and almost equally spaced chain across the Caribbean Sea, blockading the mouth of the Gulf of Mexico and the entrance to the Panama Canal. Their enormous strategic value is visible at a glance. Their commercial value is calculable when one considers the fact that they lie right across the trade routes to the great American ports on the Gulf coast, the only important sea ports of entry to the Mexican republic, and the Panama Canal, three arteries of trade still in their infancy, but even now by no means negligible. To the people of these shores and along the Spanish Main, Canada's commercial possibilities and industries are unknown. The very name signifies nothing to them. On one occasion I wished to send a cable from an important city in Central America to Canada. The local manager to this day, I am sure, believes "there is no such country." It was not in his books, and it was only with much head-shaking and fears expressed that he permitted me to pay for a cable to British North America.

#### Would Mean More Steamship Subsidies

The Act of Federation, however, must be accompanied by the provision of transportation. Canada must supply transportation, and abundant transportation, or the whole scheme of federation falls through. One steamship company, as in the past, would have to be subventioned. I feel confident that Canada would receive a return in business and from new fields open for industry that would well outweigh the money spent in subvention. It is understood, however, that a line of regular sailings would have to be established of fast vessels, properly equipped by refrigerator or cold-air process, to deliver tropical produce at Canadian ports in perfect condition. In fact, the government might be well advised to operate some of the ships, now building to its order, on this route, where they would act as valuable feeders to the government railways.

A great deal of trade between Canada and the West Indies could be carried on by sailing vessels. Of these, the colonies now have a considerable number plying in inter-insular trade and to the mainland. The demolition of customs barriers and the establishment of a regular channel of trade between Canada and the West Indies would mean that these vessels would follow that channel. It would mean the establishment of a healthy merchant marine for Canada without the need of subsidies, save one, bonuses, or complicated shipping laws. It would mean increasing the angle of every Canadian's point of view, and Canadians, while broadening their minds in the pursuit of new business,

would bring to the knowledge of millions of other minds what Canada is capable of and is doing. I am not emphasizing in this article the collateral benefits that will accrue to Canadian commerce, once established in the West Indies, through nearness to markets not under the British flag. That they will be many no one can gainsay, and they are well worth considering.

I would not wish to damage whatever force there may be in these arguments by enthusiastically proclaiming that it is a finished empire that is proposed by federation to add to the Dominion of Canada. It is not. Some of the colonies are prosperous and others not. But the "stuff" is there. The British West Indies and possessions have every natural resource that Canada has not. Some may say that Canada has sufficient to do to develop her own resources. That is true for the present, perhaps, but it will not be true always.

It is generally admitted in the West Indies that there is a very strong feeling among them in favor of federation with Canada. Many small things would have to be discussed and agreed on, but, in the main, the cry is, "Give us transportation." Let this want be supplied. Both contracting parties will immediately benefit by the expansion of trade, and the development of the natural resources of these colonies will come, inexorably, in the fullness of time.

The West Indies are by no means wild and uncivilized countries, nor are they inhabited, even in part, by savage or turbulent people. In fact, speaking generally, their civilization antedates that of Canada. The people are kindly, law-abiding and religious. They are intensely loyal, as their behavior during the great war well displayed, but the feeling has existed for a long time, and is growing day by day, that the British West Indies, for their soul's sake as well as the welfare of their industries, must associate themselves with some strong and progressive nation. England, to whom they naturally would look for encouragement of their industries and provision of capital, is a long way off. The British West Indies believe, and with reason indisputably, that their interests would be better protected by having their "high command" in closer touch with the country. . . . It is said on all sides that some steps must be taken, federation with Canada if possible; if not, annexation to the United States. The United States have already taken over the Danish West Indies and the island of Porto Rico. I would ask every Canadian, in whose memory the, to Canada, calamitous decisions of the Ashburton Treaty, dealing with what is now the State of Maine, and the Alaskan Boundary Commission, still rankle—is Canada to lose this opportunity also?

It needs no imagination to see the advantage that would accrue to Canada in having as an integral part of her Dominion a department ranging in climate from semi-tropical to tropical, with immense potentialities of resource, as well as actual industries, producing those commodities for which now Canada has to go afield. In the post-war period, when taxation will be the dominant problem in everybody's mind, it is well to calculate the advantage of retaining within the Dominion every mill of every dollar spent for the acquisition of some commodity against the disadvantage of permitting a large portion of that dollar to go out of the Dominion to enrich some foreign producer, middleman and carrier.

Canada needs these colonies. I have said that before, and I repeat it, not to start a sentence, but for the sake of emphasis. It is not to be inferred, however, that Canada's commercial activity will be greatly affected by the acquisition of the same now, or even in the next ten years. But Canada may be able to join with these colonies now, and on easy terms, too, and she will not be able to do so in ten years' time. The day will surely come when Canada, to maintain her commercial supremacy in some line of manufacture or another, will be forced to look for the advantage of drawing her raw material from her own boundaries. Whether she will find this advantage depends on us. On whether we have foresight enough to look over the pile of business on our front doorstep, which I grant, is big enough to blind the shortsighted, toward the time when Canadian industry will be working at "capacity load."