

From Baye Blanche northward to Cap de Grat is the coast on which the French have ever carried on their fishery ; and though there is nothing in the Treaties that should prevent our fishers from settling there, the desire of avoiding every interruption to their fishery has caused our Governors to prevent by all possible means any of our people from settling there, and has succeeded except with one against whom there have been no complaints.

The more inquiry is made into this matter the more I am convinced that there is no reasonable cause of complaint, but what arises from the bounties the Court of France gives to those who interfere with our fishers in ports of the coast they were not accustomed to frequent.

I have quoted from their Map ; but it is proper to inform you that it is very erroneous, and there is reason to believe not without intention.

I have, in command from His Majesty, to direct you to explain this matter fully to M. de Vergennes, who perhaps is not as earnest on this point as is represented by the Count de Guines, with whom I have discussed it this morning. At the same time your Excellency is to express His Majesty's most sincere wish to remove every reasonable cause of complaint that the French fishers may at any time have from the inhabitants residing on the coast allotted for the concurrent fishery.

Your Excellency is authorized to assure His Most Christian Majesty's Ministers that the most positive orders shall be given to the Naval Commanders on the Newfoundland Station to pay the strictest attention that the French fishers enjoy to the fullest extent all those rights to which they are entitled by the Treaties of Utrecht and Paris.

I am to desire you would not speak to M. de Vergennes on this subject unless he first starts it, as M. de Guines is to see me again on this point in a day or two.

I am, &c.

(Signed) WEYMOUTH.

No. 2.

*Viscount Weymouth to Viscount Stormont.*

(No. 5.)

My Lord,

*St. James', February 2, 1776.*

MY first conference with M. de Guines broke off that his Excellency might have time to consider the Article of the Peace of Utrecht relative to the fishery at Newfoundland, as he was not apprised that we claim the right of having resident settlements, though the stay of the French fishers on the coast is limited to the season of the fishery. His Excellency pretended that His Majesty's servants had on different occasions acknowledged they had no such right. The fact I could not agree to, but supposing it to be true, no opinion of His Majesty's Ministers could cancel a right clearly allowed by the Treaty as anterior to the period of the Peace of Utrecht we had resident settlements on the island. This appears by a Charter granted in 1610, and by several instances of encouragement given to persons to settle there. Since the interest of the nation has been better understood, such means as could legally be practised have been used to prevent their remaining on the coast during the winter, but force cannot be exerted against these residents.

His Excellency renewed the Conference on Tuesday, and was extremely pressing that some new district or portion of the island should be allowed to the French fishers as a compensation for that part of the coast allotted for the concurrent fishery, which, he pretended, they are deprived of by the prior occupancy of our resident fishermen. He was pressing that a negotiation should be entered into respecting this point. This I thought it my duty to decline, as we could never consent to any proposal they could make on that subject, and that it appears they are not grounded in their complaints. The use is not denied to them of any part of the coast allotted to the concurrent fishery, and though they have no legal claim, a very considerable portion of that coast is enjoyed by them nearly exclusively, as stated in my last letter to your Excellency on this subject.

As I have now heard and replied to everything the French Ambassador can say on this subject, I am to signify to your Excellency His Majesty's pleasure that you enter on this point with M. de Vergennes on the first opportunity.

It may probably happen that he may consider this claim as a new one, and as the forerunner of measures that may be prejudicial to their fisheries. Your Excellency will use the best means in your power to convince him that nothing is intended by it, that it became necessary to assert this in answer to M. de Guines' demand that the inhabitants now settled on the island should be removed, or that an equivalent should be ceded to the French fishers. The answer must necessarily be we have no right or power to remove