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Report on the trade, commerce, and resources of the British North American colonies, made in pursuance of instructions from the Hon. Thomas Corwin, Secretary of the Treasury, by J. D. Andrews, United States consul, St. John, New Brunswick.

ST. JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK, December 10, 1850.

SIR: I have had the honor, on several occasions, of calling the attention of the government to the extent and importance of the trade of the British North American colonies, and have endeavored to show the expediency of adopting such measures as would secure the most valuable portions of that trade to our citizens.

The proposition informally made by the Canadian government for reciprocal free trade to a certain extent, the recent changes in the navigation laws of Great Britain, and the movements in the Imperial Parliament relative to free trade, together with your instructions directing me to furnish you with some facts in relation to the British North American colonial trade and commerce, have induced me to present this question once more to the consideration of the Department of the Treasury at some length, in the hope that the information now presented may be useful to the country, and therefore satisfactory to the government.

In entering upon the consideration of this matter, it must, in the first place, be understood clearly that the intercourse between the United States and Great Britain, and that between the United States and the British North American colonies, have been conducted under regulations differing very much in their character and operations; and in order to understand the existing differences, it will be necessary to state the provisions of the several treaties, conventions, legislative enactments, proclamations, and orders in council, which have at various periods been made by the respective nations to regulate their commercial intercourse.

The commercial history of the British North American colonies may be said to commence with the peace of 1783. I will therefore proceed to trace down from that period, as concisely as possible, the various public measures which have been from time to time adopted, either to facilitate the intercourse, or, by way of retaliation, to oppose it, for its unjust or unfair restrictions.

The independence of the United States, which was formally acknowledged by the treaty of peace on the 30th November, 1782, still left Great Britain in possession of certain colonies at the northern extremity of America, and of several islands in the West Indies; and it immediately became an interesting question upon what footing the commercial intercourse between the United States and those colonies should be established.

Immediately after the conclusion of the preliminary articles of peace in November, 1782, Mr. Pitt, then Chancellor of the Exchequer, introduced into the House of Commons (March, 1783) a bill for the regulation of trade and intercourse between the people of Great Britain and of the United States, which, had it been adopted, would have laid a broad foundation for a perpetual peace and harmony between the two countries.