



CAN.
PAM
G

Grant, William L.

CANADA VERSUS
GUADELOUPE, AN EPISODE OF
THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR

BY

WILLIAM L. GRANT

REPRINTED FROM THE

American Historical Review

VOL. XVII., NO. 4

JULY, 1912

F5065

183801

G73

fol.

CANADA VERSUS GUADELOUPE, AN EPISODE OF THE SEVEN YEARS' WAR¹

THE paper war, which began in 1760, on the question whether in making peace with France it would be well to keep Canada or Guadeloupe, should a choice be found necessary, is discussed by such historians as Mr. Lecky and Mr. G. L. Beer, but though the chief pamphlets on either side were known to them both, neither the extent of the controversy nor the light which it throws on the prevailing theory of empire has always been noticed.

The fray began in January, 1760, with *A Letter addressed to Two Great Men, on the Prospect of Peace, and on the Terms necessary to be insisted upon in the Negotiation*. All these pamphlets were of course published anonymously, and if unsuccessful, disavowed, while if successful, various pretenders to the authorship were apt to arise. This *Letter* is ascribed by Lecky to Lord Bath, by the catalogue of the British Museum to J. Douglas, successively bishop of Carlisle and Salisbury. It seems probable that the pamphlet was written by Douglas, the protégé of Lord Bath, but that the author had the benefit of a revision by his patron. Bath, formerly Pulteney, had been the great opponent of Sir Robert Walpole, had been kicked upstairs into the House of Lords by his opponent, and had ever since revenged himself by throwing pamphlets out of the window. In the present case some paragraphs show an animus against Sir Robert Walpole and a knowledge of the inner history of the period 1740-1742, which make it probable that they were either inspired or dictated by the patron. Though Horace Walpole naturally alludes to it as "a very dull pamphlet", it is really written with some clearness in favor of the retention of Canada.

The flood-gates were now unloosed. Apparently the next piece to appear was *An Answer to the Letter to Two Great Men, Containing Remarks and Observations on that Piece, and Vindicating the Character of a noble Lord from Inactivity*. This, though written in a kindly spirit, does not add much to the discussion, taking the easy line that we should keep all our conquests. "I am for retaining all our American conquests, and even for insisting upon Martinico, that

¹ Paper read at the annual meeting of the American Historical Association, December, 1911.

sepulchre of our merchant men, twelve hundred of which have been carried into that Island since the beginning of the war."

It was followed by *Remarks on the Letter Addressed to Two Great Men, in a Letter to the Author of that Piece*, an able and well-written pamphlet, which was extremely popular and ran into three editions within the year. Of these the second repeats the first, while the third has a number of changes, chiefly for style, and several additions, especially a postscript of eight pages. Mr. Lecky attributes it to William Burke, a kinsman of the great Edmund; and so also does Dr. William Hunt, in the *Dictionary of National Biography*. The British Museum originally attributes it to Pulteney, which is certainly wrong, and now to Charles Townshend; with this latter identification I am disposed to agree, internal evidence going to show that it was written by a member of Parliament. Its arguments, strong in favor of the necessity of retaining Guadeloupe at all hazards, will be familiar to readers of Lecky.

Then came *A Letter to the People of England, on the Necessity of putting an Immediate End to the War, and the Means of obtaining an Advantageous Peace* (London, 1760, pp. 54), which urges that every conquest in the West Indies should be restored, rather than one foot in Canada.

But the *Remarks* had evidently made an impression, and in much anxiety Benjamin Franklin now entered the fray with what is usually known as *The Canada Pamphlet*, which was published under the title *The Interest of Great Britain considered with regard to her Colonies and the Acquisitions of Canada and Guadeloupe. To which are added, Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, etc.* This enjoyed great success, was soon acknowledged by Franklin, and was in the same year reprinted at Boston. The reprint has the following notice, "As the very ingenious, useful, and worthy Author of this Pamphlet (B—n F—n, LL.D.) is well-known and much esteemed by the principal Gentlemen in England and America; and seeing that his other Works have been received with universal Applause; the present Production needs no further Recommendation to a generous, a free, an intelligent and publick-spirited People." Franklin's pamphlet attracted much attention, and was in great part reprinted in *The Gentleman's Magazine* for May, 1760.

But perhaps the ablest pamphlet of the series is one not alluded to by Lecky, entitled *Reasons for keeping Guadeloupe at a Peace, preferable to Canada, explained in Five Letters from a Gentleman in Guadeloupe to his Friend in London* (1761). To this I cannot give

higher praise than that its author seems to me to have the better of Benjamin Franklin. He was answered by *A Detection of the False Reasons and Facts, contained in the Five Letters entitled, Reasons for keeping Guadeloupe at a Peace, preferable to Canada, explained in Five Letters from a Gentleman in Guadeloupe to his Friend in London; in which the Advantages of both Conquests are fairly and impartially stated and compared. By a Member of Parliament* (London, 1761). The style and temper of this pamphlet are much inferior to the other. The author is blustering, with perpetual recourse to italics and capital letters, and, though he convicts his opponent of occasional exaggeration, has distinctly the worst of the argument.

Meanwhile the well-known Israel Mauduit had published his celebrated *Considerations on the present German War* which, issued early in 1761, ran into six editions by the beginning of 1762, and was of distinct influence upon the conduct of the war. Mauduit's thesis, that further prosecution of the German War was but a source of bloodshed and expense, and that we should weaken France by capturing her colonies, "not useless ones on the Mississippi, but by seizing the French islands, and holding their whole West-India trade in deposit for Hanover" (fourth ed., p. 137) was obviously not without relation to the earlier controversy. It had to some extent been anticipated in an otherwise unimportant pamphlet of the earlier series, *A Letter from a Gentleman in the Country to his Friend in Town; on his Perusal of a Pamphlet addressed to Two Great Men* (1760), which says, "If we had not been so deeply engaged on the Continent, we might have extended our Conquests in the West-Indies even farther than we have done; and that St. Domingo and Martinico would, probably, have undergone, before this Time, the same Fate as Guadeloupe and Louisburgh." The great danger from France, he urges, "is her becoming our Rival at Sea; Of this we can never be too jealous". Canada is therefore of slight importance; but she must be driven from the Newfoundland fisheries, and as far as possible from the Caribbean; we must possess ourselves of "her Fishing and Sugar Islands, which has enabled her to maintain so great a Number of Sailors". This thesis, developed by Mauduit, provoked a further crop of rejoinders, and the subsequent peace negotiations of 1762 produced yet another, of which a surprisingly large number touch on the earlier dispute. Of the pamphlets issued after the *Considerations* and prior to the peace of 1763 which discuss this colonial question, I have the names of 36, not including second or third editions and reissues, and a more thorough search would doubt-

less discover others.² Undoubtedly the most important is *An Examination of the Commercial Principles of the late Negotiation between Great Britain and France in 1761* (London, Dodsley, 1762), which is also attributed by Dr. Hunt to William Burke.

In these pamphlets we have a very clear statement of the mercantilist theory of empire and can see how there was beginning to grow up in the minds of such men as Pitt a conflict between that theory and the first faint glimmerings of a new ideal of empire based on liberty, which we of the British Empire are at present endeavoring to work out. To the more enlightened statesmen of the day the ideal of the old colonial system was not that of a mother-country selfishly exploiting her dependencies; however imperfect its practical working out, however much exposed to jobs on the part of British or West Indian merchants, the ideal on which the system rested was that of a self-contained empire, in which each part produced that which it was best fitted to produce. Of this self-contained empire there were four main parts: Great Britain herself, the American continental colonies, the West Indies, and the slaving stations on the west coast of Africa. With these and with the Newfoundland fisheries, Great Britain had a self-contained empire controlling the chief trades of the world. The mother-country supplied manufactures; the West Indies, sugar and sugar products; Africa, slave-labor; and the American colonies, the products of farm, forests, and fishery for the mother-country, and still more for the West Indies. Now as the Seven Years' War drew to an end, it was evident that the West Indian side of this self-contained empire was in danger of proving inadequate. Ever since the régime introduced in 1717 by that mixture of charlatan and genius, John Law, the French islands had gone ahead much faster than the British. Deprived by the selfishness of the Cognac interest in old France of any outlet for their molasses and rum, they had developed an enormous illicit trade with our continental colonies. This the celebrated Molasses Act of 1733 had endeavored to prohibit, but by the connivance of colonial juries, the act had remained a dead letter.

By 1760 it was obvious that our possessions in North America were to be greatly enlarged, that Canada was to be circumscribed, if not wholly taken over, that the British hinterland was to extend to the Ohio, if not to the Mississippi. How then, save by taking over practically all the West Indies, was this greater America to be given an adequate outlet for her raw materials; while if no such out-

²A bibliography of the pamphlets on this subject is being prepared by Professor C. W. Alvord of the University of Illinois, and myself, and will shortly be published.

let were given, would not her surplus population be compelled to turn to manufactures, and thus to overthrow the British monopoly of her market?

This dilemma is the central theme of almost all of these pamphlets. Thus the *Examination of the Commercial Principles* compresses the whole ideal of mercantilism into a sentence when it says, "But if neither sugar nor coffee were exported [from Guadeloupe, a contingency thought possible by Franklin] and the whole of each commodity was employed in the Home Consumption [*i. e.*, imperial consumption, and so not helping our foreign trade] yet would it not be a very material point, that our own Products in one part of our dominions should pay for our products in another, instead of our being obliged to pay ready money for them in foreign markets?" So too the *Letter from a Gentleman in the Country to his Friend in Town, on his Perusal of a Pamphlet addressed to Two Great Men* says that Guadeloupe "alone employs a great Number of Ships, and that all the Islands which we have at present scarce produces Sugar enough to supply our home Consumption, which has been occasion'd by the immense Increase of our domestic Consumption of that Commodity. Of how great Use, therefore, that Island would be to us, not only in Regard to an Increase of Seamen, but of Riches, we may easily judge: For it is our Exports only, not our Imports, which enrich a Country", and he urges that, therefore, either Guadeloupe or the French part of Hispaniola must be kept. Similarly in 1762 *A Letter to the Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, the Worshipful Aldermen, and Common Council; the Merchants, Citizens, and Inhabitants, of the City of London, From an Old Servant*, which was written by one George Heathcote, ran to three editions within the year, and provoked *A Reply to Mr. Heathcote's Letter from an Honest Man*, advocates strongly the idea of a self-contained empire, arguing for the necessity of keeping Guadeloupe, Goree on the West African Coast, and the monopoly of the Newfoundland fisheries; otherwise, he says, with a profusion of capitals, "the people would be (I believe) very apt to reply, JUSTICE—JUSTICE—JUSTICE—HEADS and CONFISCATIONS". On the same principle, in the abortive negotiations of 1761, we find Pitt, who shared to the full in the mercantile beliefs of his day, laying such stress on the retention by Great Britain of both Senegal and Goree, the two most advantageous slaving stations, that this was one of the points on which the negotiations finally made shipwreck.

In discussing this dilemma the *Five Letters* in favor of the retention of Guadeloupe begin with an attack on Canada, which they

say produces nothing but "a few hats", and what do these compare "with that article of luxury sugar, the consumption of which is daily increasing both in America and Europe, and become one of the necessities of life?" Jamaica alone cannot supply us with enough sugar, and "the fur-trade does not employ the hundredth part of the shipping and seamen that the sugar trade does". "No family in England can want [*i. e.*, can be without] sugar twice a day, and few in the North parts of America can want rum as often."

In reply to this, *A Detection of the false Reasons and Facts* gives four answers, and in my opinion has the better of the argument.

1. "We are able to supply every demand of sugar without Guadeloupe; we are not able to carry on the fur-trade with advantage except we can keep Canada."

2. Canada may "be improveable to a variety of Uses, and produce many things, which in course of time shall be found necessary to mankind, and serve many other Purposes of Profit and security; unto which a sugar island, by its situation, cannot pretend".

3. If we have "an Universal Empire on the Continent of North America", we can take the sugar islands when we will.

4. A northern colony is preferable to a southern, being healthier and more suited to the development of a white race.

But the argument soon goes deeper.

The having all North-America to ourselves [says the author of the *Five Letters*] by acquiring Canada, dazzles the eyes, and blinds the understandings of the giddy and unthinking people, as it is natural for the human mind to grasp at every appearance of wealth and grandeur, yet it is easy to discover that such a peace might soon ruin Britain. I say the acquisition of Canada would be destructive, because such a country as North-America, ten times larger in extent than Britain, richer soil in most places, all the different climates you can fancy, all the lakes and rivers for navigation one could wish, plenty of wood for shipping, and as much iron, hemp, and naval stores, as any part of the world; such a country at such a distance, could never remain long subject to Britain; you have taught them the art of war, and put arms in their hands, and they can furnish themselves with everything in a few years, without the assistance of Britain, they are always grumbling and complaining against Britain, even while they have the French to dread, what may they not be supposed to do if the French is no longer a check upon them; you must keep a numerous standing army to over-awe them; these troops will soon get wives and possessions, and become Americans; thus from these measures you lay the surest foundation of unpeopling Britain, and strengthening America to revolt; a people who must become more licentious from their liberty, and more factious and turbulent from the distance of the power that rules them; one must be very little conversant in history, and totally unacquainted with the passions and operations of the human mind, who cannot foresee those events as clearly as anything

that can be discovered, that lies concealed in the womb of time; it is no gift of prophecy, it is only the natural and unavoidable consequences of such and such measures.

To this Franklin replies, not without force, that the internal hatred and jealousy of the American colonies one for another make their union hopeless. The events of the next fifteen years were to prove that he was wrong, and that by the conquest of Canada British power in North America had become at once too supreme, and too far removed from its base.

Then the advocate of Guadeloupe returns to the argument that the Americans will desire independence, and makes it a plea for the necessity of sufficient sugar islands in a self-sustaining empire. By keeping a due proportion between the West Indies, the Slave Coast, and the continental colonies, he says, we have a fourfold trade all within the empire. "Ask any man in most of our American plantations . . . if those West-India islands were doubled in extent and produce, if North-America would not thereby increase and double in value; its trade with these islands be doubled, as well as its trade with Britain." At present "it is there [*i. e.*, in the West Indies] the just proportion to be maintained amongst the three falls".

Franklin had argued that the best way to keep the colonies from thoughts of independence was to give them plenty of room for agriculture, and had argued—one wonders how far honest Benjamin was really sincere—that "a people spread thro' the whole tract of country on this side the Mississippi, and secured by Canada in our hands, would probably for some centuries find employment in agriculture, and thereby free us at home effectually from our fears of American manufactures".

In reply to this the author of the *Five Letters* argues forcibly that the more sugar islands we have the more will America stick to the production of farm produce and raw materials which can be sent to them. Otherwise,

They must naturally put those spare people to learn arts and trades; to make cloaths, shoes, stockings, shirts, etc., smiths, carpenters, braziers, and all the trades that flourish in England: after this is accomplished, of what utility will they be of to Great Britain? . . . but this is not all, for then she will rival you in the West-Indies: America will furnish those islands with every thing that now comes from England, and can do it cheaper. . . . Are not we the only people upon earth, except Spain, that ever thought of establishing a colony ten times more extensive than our own [country]; of richer soils and more variety of climates, productive of every individual thing that our country can yield, and yet fancy, when it comes to maturity, it will still depend upon us, or be of any kind of advantage to us: on the contrary, if it does not become our master, it must soon, very soon, stand our powerful rival in all branches of our trade.

And he sums up his point of view in the sentence: "Will people consider that those shining advantages North America has beyond any other country we know, is the very thing which creates our danger?" On the other hand the West Indies fit into his ideal of a self-contained empire, bound together in the bands of commercial affection, because as islands they "must always be dependent upon her, or some other such power . . . as they produce nothing that the mother-country does".

In reply to which remarkable prophecy Franklin had only the argument to advance that the high price of American labor would prove a fatal bar to the establishment of manufactures.

The advocates of expansion in North America at all hazards won the day, with the result that by the treaty of 1763 the British Empire became long on the products of farm and forest, and short on sugar. An interesting side-issue was the lively controversy which arose toward the end whether Pitt's desire for North American expansion was due to his generous love for the Americans, or to his being under the thumb of the group of West Indian planters in the House of Commons, for whom the conquest of Guadeloupe meant a new and dangerous competitor. On this the most specific statement is made by Mauduit. The fourth edition of his *Considerations*, preserved in the British Museum, has numerous manuscript notes in his own clear handwriting, some of them not without importance for the biographer of Pitt. In one of these he says:

During the whole of Mr. Pitt's administration, no one had so much of his confidence as Mr. Beckford. He was made to believe that he held the City by Beckford's means, and gave free admission to him, while he kept himself inaccessible to every one else. The revealer of his will in the House of Commons was Mr. Beckford, for Mr. Pitt himself seldom went thither. I heard him making most fulsome panegyric on Mr. Beckford's abilities; and three times following insult the whole House for presuming to laugh at Mr. Beckford's professing disinterestedness. Beckford dreaded the increase of our sugar islands, lest that might lessen the value of his lands in Jamaica, and hence proceeded Mr. Pitt's invincible aversion to any attempts on the French Islands; and the speech he made on the first day of the Sessions 1760, soon after the *Considerations* had been published, in which he expressly declared against making any further conquests in the West Indies.³ This made it necessary to resume the argument; and the following discourse was written in answer to that speech, the words of which, here quoted in italics, I took down in short-hand as he spoke them.

³ Another manuscript note of Mauduit gives Pitt's words on the occasion in question more fully than in the printed text, representing him as saying, "a nation may over-conquer itself; and by being fed with more conquests than it can digest, may have the overplus turn to surfeit and disease instead of nourishment".

Let us hope that no such motives really influenced the Great Commoner.

This Old-World controversy seems to me to prove that at the time imperial theories were much more a subject of discussion than is sometimes thought to be the case; and that the field was still held by the advocates of an empire commercially self-contained. Not till the American colonies had torn away, not till the attempt to carry on the old system after their loss had resulted in futility and widespread discontent, not till the nineteenth century, did the new idea of an empire based on liberty rise above the horizon.

WILLIAM L. GRANT.