"a glorious market wholly in the Power of Britain"

**TWO AMERICANS ON TRADE AND THE COLONIES’ VALUE TO GREAT BRITAIN**

The *Observations* of William Clarke and Benjamin Franklin, 1750s

The map at left depicts the European possessions in eastern North America before Britain’s definitive victory in the French and Indian War (1754-1763), after which all territory in the map became red. For decades preceding the war, the British colonists had felt threatened by the French “encroachments” on the north and west (and by the Spanish on the south and west). The issue was broader than security. Whoever dominated the entire Atlantic seacoast controlled the Atlantic Ocean, and in the 1700s that defined “global power.”

In 1755 after the war had begun, Bostonian William Clarke published a pamphlet addressed to the royal governor of the Massachusetts Bay colony. He stresses the necessity of defeating France and taking possession of Canada and the Ohio and Mississippi River valleys, thereby providing more security for the settlers and, more significantly for the empire, opening North America as a vast economic market for Britain. As an appendix Clarke included a paper written earlier by Benjamin Franklin, who agreed that Britain needed prodding to fully appreciate the economic potential of its mainland colonies — “a glorious market wholly under the power of Britain.” Proceeding through a series of meticulously stated sociological precepts (in which the mathematics of population growth are central), Franklin argues that Britain must enlarge the colonies’ territory as exponentially as their population was growing; otherwise their economic potential would not be realized. He arrives at his dramatic conclusion, punctuated with exclamation points: “What an Accession of Power to the British Empire by Sea as well as Land! What Increase of Trade and Navigation!”

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Franklin, *Observations*, 1751

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William Clarke

Observations on the late and present Conduct of the French, with Regard to their Encroachments upon the British Colonies in North America. Together with Remarks on the Importance of these Colonies to Great-Britain, 1755, excerpts.

It is therefore highly necessary that the most vigorous measures should be speedily and unitedly projected and pursued to oppose any further Encroachments of the French, and to oblige them to relinquish those they have already made. The Safety and Security of all the English Colonies in North America, their very being as English Colonies, make such Measures absolutely necessary, and that without any Loss of Time. And how far the Interest of Great Britain itself may make such measures necessary will appear from considering the Importance of these Colonies to the Mother Kingdom.

The Inhabitants of the Colonies in North America make a large Addition to the Subjects of Great Britain. The Extent of these Colonies, exclusive of the Island of Newfoundland, & measuring it upon the Sea-Coast from Nova Scotia to Georgia, inclusive of both, is about five Hundred Leagues [~1730 miles], & the Depth of them as far back [west] as the South Sea [Pacific]. . . .

The Settlements, which are chiefly on the Sea-Coast, may be computed to contain above One Million Inhabitants, exclusive of Indian Savages and Negro Slaves. . . .

. . . [I]t seems to be, then, the Number of Inhabitants within all the British Colonies in North America, may be expected from their natural Increase (and without making any Allowance for the transplanting of Protestant Families from the [German] Palatinate, Swiss Cantons, and other Northern Parts of Germany, to amount at the end of that Period [thirty years, to 1785] to near three Millions. . . .

The Advantage accruing to the Mother-Country from the great Number of Inhabitants in her Northern Colonies [i.e., mainland Atlantic colonies] will appear from the Consumption they will occasion of British Manufactures, and also of all other European Commodities in general, which last must be landed and reship’d in Great Britain (which is by the Acts of Trade made the Staple of them for all the English Colonies) before they can be imported into America. . . .

. . . It is computed that near half the present Shipping of Great Britain is improved in the Commerce carried on with her Plantations [colonies], which Trade only will in Time employ a much great Quantity of Shipping than all the present Shipping of Great Britain. Besides, this Trade will enable her with great Advantage to extend her Commerce with other Countries.

. . . the Prince who holds Possession of the English Colonies in North America will be in a Condition to keep the Sovereignty of the Atlantic Ocean, thro’ which the homeward bound Trade from the East and West-Indies generally passes: This evidently appears from the Extent of the Sea-Coast, which the Colonies of North America take up, abounding with most commodious harbors, from whence the Ships passing thro’ those Seas may be intercepted. . . . It is evident from what has been mentioned how much the Shipping, Trade and Maritime Power of Great Britain must be increased by the Advantages rising to her from her Colonies in North America: And on the other hand, how much her Power would be diminished, and that of France aggrandized, if she should ever happen to lose them to the French.

. . . Undoubtedly if this should ever be the Case [France gaining control of the British colonies], the Trade & Commerce of France, and with it her Naval Power, would increase to such a Degree of Superiority over that of Great Britain, as must entirely destroy her Commerce, reduce her from her present State of Independency to be, at last, nothing more than a Province of France. . . .

Upon the whole, it is evident that the French have been, and are now, in manifest Violation of the most solemn Treaties, making the most hostile Encroachments upon his Majesty’s undoubted Territories.

That the Consequences of these Encroachments, if the French are suffered to keep Possession of them, and strengthen themselves in them, will be:
1. The engrossing the whole of the Fur Trade of North America to themselves.

2. The attaching all the Indians scattered thro’ that vast Continent upon the Back [i.e., west, backcountry] of all the English Settlements to their Interest.

3. The employing those Indians when thus attached to them, even in Time of profound Peace between the two Crowns [Britain and France], to annoy any of all his Majesty’s Colonies as may best serve their Purposes.

4. That they [the French] will one Day make themselves Masters of all the British Colonies in North America.

That these Colonies are of such Consequence to the Trade, Wealth and Naval Power of Great Britain, and will in future Time make so much larger Additions to it, that whilst she keeps them entire, she will be able to maintain not only her Independency, but her Superiority as a Maritime Power. And on the other hand, should she once lose them and the French gain them, Great Britain herself must necessarily be reduced to an absolute Subjection to the French Crown, to be nothing more than a Province of France.

___END___

___Benjamin Franklin___

Observations concerning the Increase of Mankind, Peopling of Countries, &c.¹

___1751, full text___

1 Tables of the Proportion of Marriages to Births, of Deaths to Births, of Marriages to the Numbers of Inhabitants, &c. [etc.], form’d on Observations made upon the Bills of Mortality [death certificates], Christenings, &c. of populous Cities, will not suit Countries; nor will Tables form’d on Observations made on full settled old Countries, as Europe, suit new Countries, as America.

2 For People increase in Proportion to the Number of Marriages, and that is greater in Proportion to the Ease and Convenience of supporting a Family. When Families can be easily supported, more Persons marry, and earlier in Life.

3 In Cities, where all Trades, Occupations and Offices are full, many delay marrying till they can see how to bear the Charges of a Family, which Charges [expenses] are greater in Cities, as Luxury is more common. Many live single during Life, and continue Servants to Families, Journeymen to Trades, &c.; hence, Cities do not by natural Generation supply themselves with Inhabitants; the Deaths are more than the Births.

¹ Annotations by NHC, and spelling and punctuation modernized for clarity. Emboldening added to highlight the progression of Franklin’s argument.
In Countries full settled, the Case must be nearly the same. All Lands being occupied and improved to the Heighth [maximum], those who cannot get Land must Labor for others that have it. When Laborers are plenty, their Wages will be low. By low Wages, a Family is supported with Difficulty. This Difficulty deters many from Marriage, who therefore long continue Servants and single. Only as the Cities take Supplies of People from the Country and thereby make a little more Room in the Country, Marriage is a little more encourag’d there, and the Births exceed the Deaths.

Europe is generally full settled with Husbandmen [farmers], Manufacturers, &c. and therefore cannot now much increase in People. America is chiefly occupied by Indians, who subsist mostly by Hunting. But as the Hunter, of all [types of] Men, requires the greatest Quantity of Land from whence to draw his Subsistence (the Husbandman subsisting on much less, the Gardener on still less, and the Manufacturer requiring least of all), the Europeans found America as fully settled as it well could be by Hunters. Yet these having large Tracks, [the Indians] were easily prevail’d on to part with Portions of Territory to the Newcomers, who did not much interfere with the Natives in Hunting and furnish’d them with many Things they wanted.

Land being thus plenty in America, and so cheap as that a laboring Man [who] understands Husbandry [farming] can, in a short Time, save Money enough to purchase a Piece of new Land sufficient for a Plantation, whereon he may subsist a Family; such are not afraid to marry. For if they even look far enough forward to consider how their Children, when grown up, are to be provided for, they see that more Land is to be had at Rates equally easy, all Circumstances considered.

Hence Marriages in America are more general, and more generally early, than in Europe. And if it is reckoned there, that there is but one Marriage per Annum among 100 Persons, perhaps we may here reckon two; and if in Europe they have but 4 Births to a Marriage (many of their Marriages being late), we may here reckon 8, of which if one half grow up, and our Marriages are made, reckoning one with another at 20 Years of Age, our People must at least be doubled every 20 Years.

But notwithstanding this Increase, so vast is the Territory of North America, that it will require many Ages to settle it fully; and till it is fully settled, Labor will never be cheap here, where no Man continues long a Laborer for others but gets a Plantation [farm] of his own. No Man continues long a Journeyman [apprentice] to a Trade, but goes among those new Settlers and sets up for himself, &c. Hence Labor is no cheaper now in Pennsylvania than it was 30 Years ago, tho’ so many Thousand laboring People have been imported.

The Danger, therefore, of these Colonies interfering with their Mother Country in Trades that depend on Labor, Manufactures, &c. is too remote to require the Attention of Great Britain.
10 But in Proportion to the Increase of the Colonies, a vast Demand is growing for British Manufactures, a glorious Market wholly in the Power of Britain, in which Foreigners cannot interfere, which will increase in a short Time even beyond her Power of supplying, tho’ her whole Trade should be to her Colonies. Therefore Britain should not too much restrain Manufactures in her Colonies. A wise and good Mother will not do it. To distress is to weaken, and weakening the Children weakens the whole Family.

11 Besides, if the Manufactures of Britain (by Reason of the American Demands) should rise too high in Price, Foreigners who can sell cheaper will drive her Merchants out of Foreign Markets. Foreign Manufactures will thereby be encouraged and increased, and consequently foreign Nations, perhaps her Rivals in Power, grow more populous and more powerful; while her own Colonies, kept too low, are unable to assist her or add to her Strength.

12 'Tis an ill-grounded Opinion that by the Labor of Slaves, America may possibly vie in Cheapness of Manufactures with Britain. The Labor of Slaves can never be so cheap here as the Labor of working Men is in Britain. Any one may compute it. Interest of Money is, in the Colonies, from 6 to 10 per Cent. Slaves, one with another, cost 30£ [English pounds] Sterling per Head. Reckon then the Interest of the first Purchase of a Slave, the Insurance or Risk on his Life, his Clothing and Diet, Expenses in his Sickness and Loss of Time, Loss by his Neglect of Business (Neglect is natural to the Man who is not to be benefited by his own Care or Diligence), Expense of a Driver to keep him at Work, and his Pilfering from Time to Time (almost every Slave being by Nature a Thief), and compare the whole Amount with the Wages of a Manufacturer of Iron or Wool in England, you will see that Labor is much cheaper there than it ever can be by Negroes here. Why then will Americans purchase Slaves? Because Slaves may be kept as long as a Man pleases or has Occasion for their Labor, while hired Men are continually leaving their Master (often in the midst of his Business) and setting up for themselves. [See] #8.

13 As the Increase of People depends on the Encouragement of Marriages, the following Things must diminish [lower the population of] a Nation, viz. [which are]

1. The being conquered; for the Conquerors will engross as many Offices and exact as much Tribute or Profit on the Labor of the conquered as will maintain them in their new Establishment; and this diminishing the Subsistence of the Natives discourages their Marriages and so gradually diminishes them, while the Foreigners increase.

2. Loss of Territory. Thus the Britons being driven into Wales and crowded together in a barren Country insufficient to support such great Numbers, diminished ‘till the People bore a Proportion to the Produce, while the Saxons increas’d on their abandoned Lands ’till the Island became full of English. And were the English now driven
into Wales by some foreign Nation, there would in a few Years be no more Englishmen in Britain than there are now People in Wales.

3. **Loss of Trade.** Manufactures [that are] exported draw Subsistence from Foreign Countries for Numbers, who are thereby enabled to marry and raise Families. If the Nation be deprived of any Branch of Trade, and no new Employment is found for the People occupy’d in that Branch, it will also be soon deprived of so many People.

4. **Loss of Food.** Suppose a Nation has a Fishery which not only employs great Numbers but makes the Food and Subsistence of the People cheaper. If another Nation becomes Master of the Seas and prevents the Fishery, the People will diminish in Proportion as the Loss of Employ and Dearness [expense] of Provision makes it more difficult to subsist a Family.

5. **Bad Government and insecure Property.** People not only leave such a Country, and settling Abroad incorporate with other Nations, lose their native Language, and become Foreigners; but the Industry of those that remain being discourag’d, the Quantity of Subsistence in the Country is lessen’d, and the Support of a Family becomes more difficult. So heavy Taxes tend to diminish a People.

6. **The Introduction of Slaves.** The Negroes [who have been] brought into the English Sugar Islands [e.g., Barbados in the Caribbean] have greatly diminish’d [are much more populous than] the Whites there. The Poor are by this Means depriv’d of Employment, while a few Families acquire vast Estates which they spend on Foreign Luxuries and educating their Children in the Habit of those Luxuries. The same Income is needed for the Support of one that might have maintain’d 100. The Whites who have Slaves not laboring are enfeebled and therefore not so generally prolific; the Slaves being work’d too hard, and ill fed, their Constitutions are broken, and the Deaths among them are more than the Births; so that a continual Supply is needed from Africa. The Northern Colonies, having few Slaves, increase in Whites. Slaves also pejorate the Families that use them; the white Children become proud, disgusted with Labor, and being educated in Idleness, are rendered unfit to get a Living by Industry.

14 Hence

- the Prince [who] acquires new Territory, if he finds it vacant or removes the Natives to give his own People Room;

- the Legislator [who] makes effectual Laws for promoting of Trade, increasing Employment, improving Land by more or better Tillage; providing more Food by Fisheries; securing Property, &c.; and

- the Man that invents new Trades, Arts or Manufactures, or new Improvements in Husbandry

[all] may be properly called Fathers of their Nation, as they are the Cause of the Generation of Multitudes by the Encouragement they afford to Marriage.

3. Loss of trade, by reducing jobs and thereby discouraging workers from marrying and raising families.

4. Loss of a food-producing industry such as fisheries, by reducing wages and income as well as the food supply.

5. Bad government, by levying heavy taxes and discouraging home industry, thus driving its people to leave and settle in other countries.

6. Introducing slaves, by reducing jobs for wage workers and by enfeebling the wealthy who become proud and indolent.

THUS

- the ruler who gains new territory or makes more land available for people to settle by forcing the natives to move

- the lawmaker who passes laws to promote trade, jobs, better farming, etc.

- the man who creates new trades, arts, or industries, etc.

All are “Fathers of their Nation” because their improvements make the nation more prosperous, thus encouraging marriage.
As to Privileges granted to the married (such as the *Jus trium Liberorum* among the Romans), they may hasten the filling of a Country that has been thinned by War or Pestilence or that has otherwise vacant Territory; but cannot increase a People beyond the Means provided for their Subsistence.

the “right of three children,” formulated by the Roman emperor Augustus to spur population increase by granting special privileges to parents with three or more children.

Foreign Luxuries and needless Manufactures imported and used in a Nation do, by the same Reasoning, increase the People of the Nation that furnishes them and diminish the People of the Nation that uses them. Laws therefore that prevent such Importations, and on the contrary promote the Exportation of Manufactures to be consumed in Foreign Countries, may be called (with Respect to the People that make them) *generative Laws*, as by increasing Subsistence they encourage Marriage. Such Laws likewise strengthen a Country doubly by increasing its own People and diminishing its Neighbors.

Some European Nations prudently refuse to consume the Manufactures of East-India. They should likewise forbid them to their Colonies; for the Gain to the Merchant is not to be compar’d with the Loss by this Means of People to the Nation.

Home Luxury in the Great increases the Nation’s Manufacturers employ’d by it, who are many, and only tends to diminish the Families that indulge in it, who are few. The greater the common fashionable Expense of any Rank of People, the more cautious they are of Marriage. Therefore Luxury should never be suffer’d [allowed] to become common.

The great Increase of Offspring in particular Families is not always owing to greater Fecundity of Nature, but sometimes to Examples of Industry in the Heads, and industrious Education, by which the Children are enabled to provide better for themselves, and their marrying early is encouraged from the Prospect of good Subsistence.

If there be a Sect, therefore, in our Nation that regard Frugality and Industry as religious Duties, and educate their Children therein more than others commonly do, such Sect must consequently increase more by natural Generation than any other Sect in Britain.

The Importation of Foreigners into a Country that has as many Inhabitants as the present Employments and Provisions for Subsistence will bear, will be in the End no Increase of People, unless the Newcomers have more Industry and Frugality than the Natives, and then they will provide more Subsistence and increase in the Country; but they will gradually eat the Natives out. Nor is it necessary to bring in Foreigners to fill up any

Nations that import luxury goods thereby limit their population growth. Thus they should pass laws to *limit the import of luxury goods and to encourage the export of goods to other nations*. By stimulating the economy in this way, they will encourage marriage and spur population growth.

On this precept, some European nations do not import luxury goods from Asia. The merchant’s profit is not as important to a nation as its population growth.

Manufacturing luxury goods may help a nation by providing jobs, but *consuming luxury goods should be discouraged*, because those who buy expensive goods are less disposed to marry.

That the reproduction rate is growing in some families may be due less to natural fertility than to having been well prepared as children to provide for themselves through frugality and industriousness. Such people will marry earlier since they know they can provide for their families.

Any religious group that raises its children to be frugal and industrious will see a more rapid population growth than other religious groups.

Bringing in foreign workers when the nation’s economy cannot provide for their sustenance, does not lead in the long run to stable population growth.
occasional Vacancy in a Country, for such Vacancy (if the Laws are good, see items 14 & 16) will soon be filled by natural Generation. Who can now find the Vacancy made in Sweden, France or other Warlike Nations by the Plague of Heroism 40 Years ago; in France by the Expulsion of the Protestants; in England by the Settlement of her Colonies; or in Guinea by 100 Years Exportation of Slaves that has blacken’d half America? The thinness of Inhabitants in Spain is owing to National Pride and Idleness, and other Causes, rather than to the Expulsion of the Moors, or to the making of new Settlements.

22 There is, in short, no Bound to the prolific Nature of Plants or Animals but what is made by their crowding and interfering with each others’ Means of Subsistence. Was the Face of the Earth vacant of other Plants, it might be gradually sowed and overspread with one Kind only, as, for Instance, with Fennel; and were it empty of other Inhabitants, it might in a few Ages be replenish’d from one Nation only, as, for Instance, with Englishmen. Thus there are suppos’d to be now upwards of One Million English Souls in North America (tho’ ’tis thought scarce 80,000 have been brought over Sea) and yet perhaps there is not one the fewer in Britain but rather many more on Account of the Employment the Colonies afford to Manufacturers at Home.

This Million doubling, suppose but once in 25 Years, will in another Century be more than the People of England, and the greatest Number of Englishmen will be on this Side [of] the Water. What an Accession of Power to the British Empire by Sea as well as Land! What Increase of Trade and Navigation! What Numbers of Ships and Seamen! We have been here but little more than 100 Years, and yet the Force of our Privateers [ships] in the late War, united, was greater, both in Men and Guns, than that of the whole British Navy in Queen Elizabeth’s Time. How important an Affair then to Britain is the present Treaty for settling the Bounds between her Colonies and the French, and how careful should she be to secure Room enough, since on the Room depends so much the Increase of her People?

23 In fine, A Nation well regulated is like a Polypus [hydra]; take away a Limb, its Place is soon supply’d. Cut it in two, and each deficient Part shall speedily grow out of the Part remaining. Thus if you have Room and Subsistence enough, as you may by dividing, make ten Polypes out of one, you may of one make ten Nations, equally populous and powerful; or rather, increase a Nation tenfold in Numbers and Strength.

And since Detachments of English from Britain sent to America will have their Places at Home so soon supply’d and increase so largely here, why should the Palatine [German] Boors be suffered to swarm into our Settlements, and by herding together establish their Language and Manners to the Exclusion of ours? Why should Pennsylvania, founded by the English, become a Colony of Aliens, who will shortly be so numerous as to Germanize us instead of our Anglifying them, and will never adopt our Language or Customs, any more than they can acquire our Complexion.

Due to its vast expanse, North America has seen a rapid increase of population. One million English people now live on the continent. If the population continues to double every twenty-five years, in a century there will be more Englishmen in North America than in Great Britain. “What an accession of power to the British Empire...” Thus it is critically important for the boundaries between British and French territory in North America to be settled. Only with ample and secure land can the colonies support a rapid population growth.

In sum, a stable nation can steadily increase its population. If we can depend on English immigrants to settle and contribute to the colonies' growing population, why should we allow Germans to emigrate here with their alien language and customs?
Which leads me to add one Remark: That the Number of purely white People in the World is proportionably very small. All Africa is black or tawny. Asia chiefly tawny. America (exclusive of the Newcomers) wholly so. And in Europe, the Spaniards, Italians, French, Russians and Swedes, are generally of what we call a swarthy Complexion, as are the Germans also, the Saxons only excepted, who with the English make the principal Body of White People on the Face of the Earth. I could wish their Numbers were increased. And while we are, as I may call it, Scouring our Planet by clearing America of Woods and so making this Side of our Globe reflect a brighter Light to the Eyes of Inhabitants in Mars or Venus, why should we in the Sight of Superior Beings, darken its People? why increase the Sons of Africa by Planting them in America, where we have so fair an Opportunity, by excluding all Blacks and Tawneys, of increasing the lovely White and Red? But perhaps I am partial to the Complexion of my Country, for such Kind of Partiality is natural to Mankind.

THE END.