

# Report of the Annual Meeting

## Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada

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### Pitt's Decision to Keep Canada in 1761

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Volume 5, Number 1, 1926

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/300538ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/300538ar>

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#### Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association/La Société historique du Canada

#### ISSN

0317-0594 (print)

1712-9095 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

#### Cite this article

Reid, M. G. (1926). Pitt's Decision to Keep Canada in 1761. *Report of the Annual Meeting / Rapports annuels de la Société historique du Canada*, 5(1), 21–32.  
<https://doi.org/10.7202/300538ar>

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## HISTORICAL PAPERS

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### PITT'S DECISION TO KEEP CANADA IN 1761

BY MARJORIE G. REID

The decision of British statesmen to keep Canada after the Seven Year's War has never been fully explained. The related question, "Why France lost Canada," has been frequently discussed: it can be answered by an analysis of the military and naval strength of the two nations. These same facts form, of course, a part of the answer to the question, "Why Britain kept Canada." If Quebec had not been conquered in 1759, Great Britain could not have won it by diplomacy in 1763. The ministers of Louis XV would not have surrendered without a struggle the colony which their predecessors had fondly named *La Nouvelle France*. I do not, however, propose to add anything to the very able studies which have been made of this branch of the subject. I mention it only in order to point out that the war did not necessarily settle the future of Canada. Great Britain was obliged to surrender some of her conquests. Why did she keep Canada?

The cession of Canada was the first stage in the negotiations between the two powers.<sup>1</sup> When diplomatic negotiations formally began, in the spring of 1761, Pitt gave to his ambassador, Hans Stanley, no definite instructions about the British terms except that the basis of negotiation should be the *uti possidetis*. The young diplomat was warned against being drawn unwittingly into any preliminary statement of terms. France, said Pitt, had been the aggressor and the loser, and it was for her to offer concessions. When Stanley reached Paris he reported that the French foreign minister, the Duke of Choiseul, had endeavoured by "cheerful dinners in the highest company" and by every art of conversation, to discover the intentions of the British ministry, especially in regard to Canada and Gaudeloupe. Stanley was on his guard, and the onus of making the first propositions fell upon the French. They were briefly set forth in a paper which is referred to in the British correspondence as the "Little Leaf" of June 17.<sup>2</sup>

"The proposals of the Duke of Choiseul to Mr. Stanley: He demands the restitution of Guadeloupe and Mariegalante, as well as of Goree, in exchange for the Island of Minorca: he proposes the absolute cession of Canada with the exception of Isle Royal, where no fortifications shall be built, and to confirm this cession France insists upon the preservation of the cod-fishery as it was established by the Treaty of Utrecht, and upon a definition of the boundaries of Canada in the region of the Ohio. . . ."

Pitt replied to this "breaking of Choiseul's mind" by an informal counter-memorandum on June 26. In it he accepted the cession of Canada,

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<sup>1</sup> The formal memorials of the negotiation are most easily accessible in *Parliamentary History*, XV, p. 1018. The whole correspondence is in the State Papers, Foreign, France, 251-253, at the Public Record Office.

<sup>2</sup> Enclosed in Stanley to Pitt, June 18, 1761 (State Papers Foreign, France, 251).

but objected to the limitations which had been coupled with it. Canada must be ceded "whole and entire, not mutilated or dismembered." The later correspondence contains a protracted discussion about the southern boundary of Canada, and about the fisheries of Newfoundland, but the main question was not re-opened. The negotiations broke off in October, 1761, when Pitt resigned from his office over the dispute about the war with Spain. They were resumed by Bute late in the same year through informal agents, and brought to a conclusion in February, 1763. The cession of Canada was accepted by both parties at the beginning of these later discussions. During the debate in the House of Commons upon the preliminary terms of Bute's peace,<sup>3</sup> Pitt commented once upon the surrender of Canada: "Of the dereliction of North America by the French, he entirely approved. But the negotiators had no trouble in obtaining this acquisition. It had been the *uti possidetis* in his own negotiation, to which the French had readily consented."

In Pitt's correspondence with the Colonial Governors,<sup>4</sup> and with the military and naval officers in America, he had never indicated a definite intention of keeping Canada. There is, however, ample evidence that he was deeply concerned about the security of the American Colonies. In 1756 his reason for taking the offensive against the French was "the danger to which North America stands exposed." Two years later he aimed at securing the undisputed possession of the Ohio valley. In 1759, in the midst of the peace conversations instigated by the King of Prussia, he warned Amherst not to allow rumours of approaching peace to impede the military activities. He was determined in January, 1760 that nothing should "jeopardize the completion of the conquest of Canada." In June, reports of the French counter-attack upon Quebec led him to fear a "fatal catastrophe" there. It is clear that he wished to conquer New France, but whether he intended to keep it, or to exchange it for some other position, is not revealed. He regarded the security of the Atlantic colonies as a primary object of the war, but he nowhere stated definitely to officials in America that he considered the entire exclusion of the French as essential to that end. All through the year 1759, while the British forces were converging upon Quebec, Pitt was unwilling to commit himself about the terms or peace. During a debate in the Commons on Louisbourg, Pitt had replied to a question by Sir John Philipps and Alderman Beckford by saying that it was too early yet to decide what we would or would not restore.<sup>5</sup>

The most direct information about Pitt's share in the early Cabinet discussions upon the terms of peace is to be found in the Newcastle Papers, now in the British Museum. During the summer of 1759 the Prussian Ministers in Britain, Knyphausen and Michel, had sounded the British Ministers about the possibility of terminating the war. Their activities were favoured by Newcastle,<sup>6</sup> whose natural timidity led him to fear the ill effects of a long war. Knyphausen held several conversations with Pitt without, however, drawing from him any statement of preliminary terms.

<sup>3</sup> December 9, 1762 (Parl. Hist. XV, p. 1264).

<sup>4</sup> *Correspondence of William Pitt, when Secretary of State with colonial governors and military and naval commissioners in America*, ed. Gertrude Selwyn Kimball (New York, 1906).

<sup>5</sup> Walpole, *George II*, vol. III, p. 150.

<sup>6</sup> British Museum, Addit. MSS. 32896, f. 36: Newcastle to Hardwicke, Sept. 22, 1759.

He was waiting until the end of the year's campaigns in America. On October 12 Knyphausen reported to Newcastle a conversation with Pitt: "He told me that, by what he could learn, Mr. Pitt did not think of keeping Louisbourg: but whether he would demolish it, or not, before it was given up, he did not know: he also thought Mr. Pitt had no notion of keeping Quebec, but that we should keep masters of the Lakes, Crown Point, Niagara, etc."<sup>7</sup> A line through the Great Lakes was at that time being generally discussed in London. The Earl of Kinnoul spoke of it to Newcastle on October 17.<sup>8</sup> In January, 1760 the Earl of Morton suggested to Newcastle a modification which would carry the boundary as far north as the Ottawa River and the north shore of Lake Huron.<sup>9</sup> The Earls of Newcastle and Hardwicke supported the idea. They favoured conciliatory terms, in order speedily to terminate the war. "If you keep Quebec," wrote Hardwicke to Newcastle, "you must keep all Canada, and Louisbourg as the key to it, and is that possible without fighting on forever?"<sup>10</sup> One person of consequence, however, was not satisfied with the proposed restitutions in America—George II. On October 15 Newcastle reports to Hardwicke, "His Majesty then exclaimed against the restitutions in America, and, I hear, told the secretaries this day that Quebec must not be given up—we should never be safe there, if it was."<sup>11</sup>

On the following day news arrived that Quebec had been surrendered to the British forces. Newcastle was thrown into a state of perturbation at the thought of reaching a decision about its future. Anticipations of difficulty of finding revenue for another year of war inclined him still to peace. The recent victories had, however, raised the spirits of the populace; they were inflamed by the hope of further victories if the war should continue. The attitude of Pitt was dubious. Holderness, the other secretary of state, was a mere cipher, "Pitt's footman," and the King was opposed to concessions. "I shall have a fine work upon my hands," wrote Newcastle to Hardwicke, half suspecting his own ineffectiveness, "if I was to attempt settling ideas, and opinions, with the two present secretaries of state: especially informed as I am, or suspecting as I do, what is His Majesty's opinion as to peace, in general, and the particular terms of it."<sup>12</sup> The Earl replied with a candour only equalled by his courtesy, "Besides the King and your Grace there is but one man material in this consideration, and that is Mr. Pitt: and, in the present situation, whatever he will espouse and support will probably go down with the populace."<sup>13</sup> Pitt still reserved his judgment, although he deplored the extravagance of the King's demands, suspecting that they were made in order later to purchase concessions from the French in Germany. Pitt was at this time trying to maintain friendly relations with the two minor Bourbon powers, Spain and Naples, and he knew that they would resent excessive demands upon France, especially if these should disturb the equilibrium of power in America. In writing to Hardwicke about the news from Quebec, Pitt

<sup>7</sup> Addit. MSS. 32897, f. 32: Newcastle's memorandum of a conversation with Knyphausen.

<sup>8</sup> Addit. MSS. 32897, f. 178: Kinnoul to Newcastle, Oct. 17, 1759.

<sup>9</sup> Addit. MSS. 32901, f. 290.

<sup>10</sup> Addit. MSS. 32897, f. 138, Hardwicke to Newcastle, Oct. 16, 1759.

<sup>11</sup> Addit. MSS. 32998, ff. 148, 378: Memoranda of the Duke of Newcastle; 32897, f. 87 and 35419, f. 6: Newcastle to Hardwicke, Oct. 15, 1759.

<sup>12</sup> Addit. MSS. 32897, f. 285: Newcastle to Hardwicke, Oct. 22, 1759.

<sup>13</sup> Addit. MSS. 32897, f. 350: Hardwicke to Newcastle, Oct. 24, 1759.

tempered his satisfaction with an uneasy reference to the difficulty of drawing up such a peace as would please everybody. On the following day he admitted to Newcastle that the King talked unreasonably about peace.<sup>14</sup> On October 31 he discussed the terms of peace more frankly with Newcastle who, as usual, reported the conversation to Hardwicke:—

"I mentioned to your Lordship, that Mr. Pitt had much ridiculed the King's way of talking about the conditions of peace, and the retaining *all our conquests*. He seem'd really desirous of peace, this winter, and upon reasonable terms—saw the difficulties of carrying on the war in Germany, for want of men—was desirous to keep Senegal, and Gorée—seem'd more indifferent about *Guadaloupe*,—supposed, we must have Minorca again, and by his manner of discourse, I should think by keeping possession of Niagara, the Lakes, Crown Point, and a proper security for our own colonies, the Bay of Fundy, etc., was all that he had at present determined. That, as to Quebec, Montreal, and even Louisbourg, they were points to be treated upon—not to be given up for nothing: but what might deserve consideration and be proper matter of negotiation."<sup>15</sup>

In February, 1760, news came through the Prussian ambassador that France was willing to surrender Canada.<sup>16</sup> Sir Andrew Mitchell, the British Ambassador at Berlin, corroborated the report in a "most secret" letter to Holderness: "He [Frederick] seems however to believe that France wishes for peace, and he added, that by the information he had from that country, they would be willing to purchase it with the loss of Canada."<sup>17</sup> Frederick was at this time working for a general pacification. His wish may have been father to his report, for the French officially denied having made any such proposition.<sup>18</sup> Frederick's suggestion was probably based upon a sentence from a letter written at this time by Choiseul to Voltaire, and forwarded by the latter to Frederick. The private correspondence of Choiseul and Voltaire was a regular channel for unofficial communications with the King of Prussia. "Let him [Frederick] know," wrote Choiseul, "that in spite of our losses and as a result of his own losses, although the King may lose for a time his possessions in America, he is still able, if he so wishes, to annihilate the power of Prussia."<sup>19</sup> Choiseul was probably reconciled to the loss of Canada—he had never shown much interest in northern colonies—but he was not yet ready to make an official proposal.

The accession of George III brought nearer the chances of peace, because he was not, like George II, anxious to prolong the war in order to win territory in Germany. During the summer of 1760, while success was coming to British arms abroad, he opposed all suggestions of peace. Victory was steadily improving Britain's position in regard to France. Pitt occupied himself solely with the conduct of the war. The capture of Montreal drew from him no comments about peace. Finally, in December

<sup>14</sup> Addit. MSS. 32897, f. 173: Heads of Mr. Pitt's conversation, Oct. 17, 1759.

<sup>15</sup> Addit. MSS. 32897, f. 512.

<sup>16</sup> Addit. MSS. 32998, f. 378: Memorandum for My Lord Mansfield, of a conversation with Knyphausen, the Prussian minister.

<sup>17</sup> *Memoirs and Papers of Sir Andrew Mitchell*, ed. Bisset (London, 1850): Mitchell to Holderness, Jan. 16, 1760.

<sup>18</sup> Addit. MSS. 32902, f. 408: Newcastle to Sir Joseph Yorke, Feb. 26, 1760.

<sup>19</sup> *Choiseul et Voltaire d'après les lettres inédites*, ed. Pierre Calmettes (Paris, 1902): Choiseul to Voltaire, Dec. 20, 1759. See also Choiseul to Voltaire, May 25, 1760, and Mitchell to Holderness, July 31, 1760 (*Mitchell Memoirs*, op. cit.).

he vouchsafed to outline the alternatives in a conversation with the Prussian ambassador, without, however, committing himself to either of them.

"He divided his propositions thus, either to retain all Canada, Cape Briton, and exclude the French from their fishing on Newfoundland, and give up Guadaloupe and Gorée, or retain Guadaloupe and Gorée with the exclusion of the French Fishery on Newfoundland, and give up some part of Canada, and confine ourselves to the Line of the Lakes, etc. . . . He did not talk of one of them as *sine qua non*."<sup>20</sup>

This state of uncertainty was not broken until early in April, 1761, when Newcastle heard, through a friend upon whom he could "absolutely depend," that France was willing to surrender Canada.<sup>21</sup> By the middle of the month Pitt had communicated his final decision to the King and the Ministers:—

"Mr. Pitt said, he had laid his thoughts fully before the King . . . that he thought the total destruction of the French in the East Indies, the probability of taking Martinico, and the effect that this expedition on Belisle might have, as well as the probable events of this campaign, would enable us to get a peace, which should secure to us, all Canada, Cape Breton, the Islands, the Harbours, the fisherys and particularly the exclusive fishery of Newfoundland. That if he was ever capable to sign a treaty without it he should be sorry, that he had ever got again the use of his right hand."<sup>22</sup>

Pitt's decision to retain Canada was practically a final settlement of the question. His popularity was at its height, the machinations of George III to oust from the cabinet the only man strong enough to oppose a "patriot king," though begun in January, 1761, had not perceptibly weakened Pitt's influence. He was strong enough first to keep the cabinet and the foreign diplomats waiting for a year and a half while he made up his mind about the future of Canada, and then to settle the whole question in one brief interview with the king.

The long period of hesitation is an interesting commentary both upon the quality of Pitt's statecraft and upon the prevalent opinion as to the value of Canada. Pitt's strength was never the so-called strength of the obstinate man who determines upon a certain object and grimly fights until he obtains it. His decisions were final, at least when they concerned matters of critical importance, but he arrived at them without undue haste. The value of Canada was at that time uncertain. It must never again, he knew, become a base of attack upon the thirteen colonies, but perhaps that evil could be prevented and the broader interests of the nation better served by defining accurately the boundary between the two powers in America. In the spring of 1761 almost nothing was known in England about the economic possibilities of Canada. Two or three years later this ignorance had been partially dispelled by the reports of military officers stationed in the newly conquered territory, and by the letters of merchants who were beginning to exploit its resources. Both among Pitt's private papers, and in the pamphlets there is evidence that by 1763 opinion about Canada was changing. But in 1761 the only commercial argument in its favour was brought forward by the more advanced economists who wished to widen the American market. It was not, however, obviously necessary to give the colonists a whole continent before they could go in

<sup>20</sup> Addit. MSS. 35420, f. 129: Newcastle to Hardwicke, Dec. 3, 1760.

<sup>21</sup> Addit. MSS. 35420, f. 239: Newcastle to Hardwicke, Ap. 4, 1761.

<sup>22</sup> Addit. MSS. 35420, f. 245: Newcastle to Hardwicke, Ap. 17, 1761.

and possess it: their immediate hinterland might satisfy their present needs and the ambitions of the English manufacturers. The case for retaining Canada was by no means clear on these grounds. Pitt's hesitation seems to have come near to causing the loss of Canada in the winter of 1759-60, when his Prussian ally was urging peace, and the strain of the war was taxing the British treasury. At this juncture the stubbornness of George II may have prevented an offer to treat about the restoration of Canada. Canada owed much to the Hanoverians in these dubious early years of her history. She owed the Quebec Act in great measure to the determination of George III: it is possible that she owed her status as a member of the British Commonwealth to the German tenacity of George II.

The new elements which brought Pitt to his sudden decision of April, 1761, were, without doubt, the military and naval victories of 1760, and the unsolicited offer by France to cede Canada. Newcastle's timidity, though comprehensible, was not justified. Britain had found the resources for another year of war, and, moreover, she had every prospect of making further conquests in the campaigns which were just beginning. Pitt could not, however, keep all his conquests: he would probably have to choose between Canada and Guadeloupe. When he outlined the two alternatives in a confidential interview with the Prussian ambassador in December, 1760, he realized that one or other of these conquests must be given up, and in his earliest reply to Choiseul's proposals the surrender of Guadeloupe was foreshadowed. At the crucial moment the choice between Canada and Guadeloupe seems to have been precipitated by the court of France. Choiseul's first unofficial suggestion to the King of Prussia that France might have to surrender her possessions in America was corroborated in April, 1761. Immediately afterwards Pitt communicated his decision to the king. The choice of France was accepted, and the future of Canada was settled. It is significant in this connection that France did not at any future time attempt to recover Canada. During the Revolutionary War, Lafayette had a romantic notion of restoring the French Empire in America, but we have indisputable evidence that he was not supported by the French minister in that intention. Vergennes had been educated in the school of Choiseul. Neither of them thought that France's greatness depended upon the possession of colonies in the northern hemisphere. In the eighteenth century only a great manufacturing and trading nation could afford to maintain such colonies, for only to such a people had they a commercial value. By her decision of 1761 Britain attached to her empire a colony that had been left derelict (the word is almost justified) by France. Its future development was due partly to its great, unsuspected resources, partly to British enterprise, and partly to the breaking up of the first Empire. The first decision to retain it in 1761 seems, like many momentous choices, to have been reached almost by chance, yet destiny was already revealing itself in the reasons which brought about the decision. Pitt's policy was in keeping with the destiny of Great Britain. He had determined to make the American colonies safe, for he thought that they were necessary to the greatness of his country, and by conquering and keeping Canada for them he assured Britain of a second chance to build up a colonial empire. Like the more progressive economists of his day he valued continental colonies in the temperate zone because they

provided markets for British manufactured goods; what was this opinion but an evidence of the industrial revolution of which Britain was the first to take advantage? France, on the other hand, was not anxious to keep Canada. Her greatness was on the continent of Europe. Choiseul's choice, like Pitt's, was in keeping with the destiny of his nation.

Such was the course of events by which Canada came finally into British hands. It is now possible, without interrupting the narrative, to inquire further into the sources of the opinion which Pitt and the ministers held. Upon what grounds did they reach their conclusions about the strategic and commercial advantages of acquiring more territory in America? The decision to keep Canada is usually explained by a reference to the periodical literature of the time.

The closing events of the war occasioned one of those pamphlet controversies which was so characteristic an expression of eighteenth century opinion. From the beginning of the controversy in 1759 to the end of 1763 at least one hundred pamphlets were written to discuss the terms of the French peace: probably many more have been entirely lost. The most complete list of pamphlets on the Peace of Paris, that of Mr. Alvord in his *Mississippi Valley in British Politics*,<sup>23</sup> reveals the fact that many which are not now accessible in England have been preserved in American collections, notably in the collection of the John Carter Brown Library. In the British Museum and in the Bodleian Library at Oxford copies of about half of Professor Alvord's list have been preserved, and these libraries contain about an equal number which have not been noted by him. A careful examination of the whole series fails, however, to disclose any consensus of opinion. The writers were distracted by the complex issues of the treaty. The question of the demands which should be made upon France was a matter not only of political principle, but of private interest. There were chauvinistic patriots who would hear of nothing but keeping everything that Britain had gained during the war, and advocates of peace at any price. There were many who, from political conviction or party jealousy, wished to cry down one or other of the ministerial factions. The merchants showed great diversity of opinion. Some, especially the manufacturers of woollen goods, were concerned in the unhindered development of the American colonies, since the best market for British goods was among the settlers and traders of the interior. It was also maintained that, if the menace of border attacks by French Indians were removed, and the colonists were encouraged to occupy themselves with the agricultural settlement of the west, they would be less apt to set up rival manufactures. The West Indian merchants were divided. Some urged that the British should retain the French islands and with their products "corner" the European market; others, apparently those who were benefited by the narrow monopoly of the Jamaica sugar industry, feared competition in the home markets, and opposed, on that account, the acquisition of new islands. In this welter of conflicting interests the question of Canada's future was frequently lost; it is impossible to deduce from the pamphlets any general opinion.

It is equally impossible, with a few exceptions, to establish a connection between the pamphlets and any official decision. The pamphlet was the most irresponsible stage in the history of the British newspaper.

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<sup>23</sup> Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A., 1917.



Poorly printed tracts by anonymous writers, bearing no name except that of the printer, often marred by gross errors in fact and by scandalous personal attacks—what weight could they have with ministers of state? Only once or twice were they referred to during the parliamentary debates on the peace. Newcastle, in his private correspondence, mentions one or two with approval. Pitt was probably influenced by one—Franklin and Jackson's *Interest of Great Britain Considered*—but in this case the authors were men whom he occasionally consulted in person. For the rest, we have it upon his own authority that he did not read them. He took his information about the opinion of the country from other, more responsible persons. It is significant that the authorship of all the important pamphlets can be traced with a fair degree of certainty. The first pamphlet of the series was *A Letter addressed to two Great Men on the Prospect of Peace*, generally ascribed to John Douglas, bishop of Salisbury. The author advised retaining all the British conquests in America, including Canada, "otherwise you lay the foundation of another war", but he was willing to cede the fishing privileges formerly granted by the thirteenth article of the Treaty of Utrecht, with Cape Breton, unfortified, as a shelter for French fishing vessels. The value of Canada was strategic: its possession would guarantee the safety of the Atlantic colonists. Other conquests, Guadeloupe and the West African ports of Senegal and Goree, though more remunerative, should not be insisted upon as necessary conditions of peace. This pamphlet was probably written at the request of the Earl of Bath, the patron of John Douglas, and a Whig who moved in official circles. It was first noted by Newcastle on December 24, 1759,<sup>24</sup> and by Jenkinson in the Grenville Papers on December 25, 1759.<sup>25</sup>

Before the end of January, 1760, came a reply in *Remarks on the Letter addressed to Two Great Men*, written, probably by William Burke. William Burke was a kinsman and close companion of Edmund Burke. William Burke later became Secretary for Guadeloupe (1762) and Under-Secretary of State during the Rockingham Ministry. He criticized the demands of the first writer as being too extravagant. England had gone to war to establish fixed boundaries for Canada, not to annex it; its entire possession was not essential to the security of the British colonies. Its financial value was slight and Britain already had enough of the northern commodities which it produced. Moreover, danger lurked in the unchecked expansion of the more independent colonies. "The possession of Canada, far from being necessary to our safety, may, in its consequences, be even dangerous. A neighbour that keeps us in some awe is not always the worst of neighbours. . . . There is a balance of power in America as well as in Europe, which will not be forgotten."

These two pamphlets define clearly the actual alternatives in regard to the future of Canada. The security of the American colonists was the chief consideration—both authors were so far in agreement. Could this object be secured by defining the southern boundary of Canada or was it necessary to retain the whole St. Lawrence valley? This, it seems, was the point actually under discussion at the Cabinet meetings; the inspiration of these pamphlets was probably official.

<sup>24</sup> Addit. MSS. 32900, f. 276.

<sup>25</sup> *The Grenville Papers*, ed. William James Smith (London, 1852).

The important pamphlet of Franklin and Jackson, published in April or May, 1760, was probably an invited expression of their own opinion. Benjamin Franklin was at this time acting as agent in London for several of the Atlantic colonies. Their pamphlet, which bore the cumbersome title *The Interest of Great Britain Considered, With Regard to the Colonies, and the Acquisitions of Canada and Guadeloupe*, was an answer to William Burke's *Remarks*. Its authors attacked Burke's theory that a settlement of the ancient boundary dispute would establish peaceful relations in America. Canada must be retained in its entirety. It was not likely to bring pecuniary advantage, but its possession would tend to increase the agricultural population of America and the market for British manufacturers. The popular theory that northern nations should acquire colonies in the tropics in order to complement their own products was not supported by experience. Trade was often most brisk between countries in the same climate. British trade to the American continent was increasing rapidly with the growth of settlement and wealth. On the other hand, the West Indian trade had not increased in recent years; it would always be limited by scantiness of territory and population. This was the other great argument for retaining Canada—an argument which showed the influence of new economic doctrines which had come with the industrial revolution to Great Britain. William Temple Franklin claims that Benjamin Franklin was consulted by Pitt during the peace negotiations. This is probably true, as we know that the elder Pitt had a high opinion of Franklin's judgment upon colonial questions.

No other pamphlets of the time had a marked influence upon the Ministers' policy regarding Canada. Most of the pamphlets were published after April, 1761, when the actual decision was made. In its later stages the public controversy did affect the policy of Bute's Ministry in regard to the boundary of Louisiana, but that is a question which lies outside the scope of this paper.

Among Pitt's private papers are a few documents which reflect his opinion upon these and other pertinent issues. The Earl of Chatham was the most reticent of British statesmen. At no time in correspondence or in personal intercourse did he indulge in those statements of general policy which delight the political historian. In all his collection of papers there is no direct statement of his views about Canada. There are, however, among the comparatively few documents which he preserved, several which bear upon the issues raised by the pamphlets. These documents point, almost without exception, to the necessity and advantages of retaining Canada. They confirm the accepted opinion of Pitt as pre-eminently an advocate of colonies and commerce. He probably supported the advocates of continental expansion as against the advocates of insular expansion. The most significant of his early papers is endorsed "Robert Dinwiddie's state of His Majesty's colonies and plantations in America, September, 1743."<sup>26</sup> It must have been considered important, as abstracts of it appear elsewhere in the Chatham collection. Robert Dinwiddie, at that time an officer of the revenue in the West Indies, later became lieutenant-governor of Virginia. The document is a statement in round figures of the relative values to Britain of her continental and West Indian colonies. The population of the continental colonies is shown to be greater than the population of the British West Indies. The former employed many more British ships in their carrying trade in addition to supporting a mercantile

navy of their own; they consumed nearly as much English merchandise as the island colonies; the volume of their external trade was greater and it remained chiefly within the Empire.

The next document in chronological order, in which the acquisition of Canada is directly mentioned, is a long paper written by William Vaughan in 1745, and entitled "Remarks on the state of Newfoundland, Cape Breton, Nova Scotia and Canada."<sup>27</sup> The author describes himself as a native of New Hampshire and a projector of the recent expedition against Cape Breton. He had come to London after the conquest of Louisbourg to urge upon the ministers the wisdom of acquiring all the French possessions in America. His immediate desire was to found a Protestant settlement in Nova Scotia, but his plans were not limited to the maritime provinces. He gives a glowing description of "Canada River," its length, the fertile soil upon its banks, the natural products of the country through which it flows, and the industries which may be set up there under British enterprise. "If the nation of Great Britain had these northern countries with quiet and good management, what glorious things might come thereof? . . . . According to the best apprehensions, to have these northern colonies entirely to ourselves would be of more consequences to the nation than if they had all the Spanish West Indies." To support his claim he appends a curious "Testimonial showing that the French possessions on the River of Canada do originally and of right belong to the Crown of Great Britain;" in this he claims the St. Lawrence gulf and valley for Britain by reason of the voyages of John and Sebastian Cabot. William Vaughan's efforts were fruitless at the time—the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle disappointed all the hopes of the colonists, but his arguments bore fruit fifteen years later.

Among the papers which the Earl of Halifax sent to Pitt from the Board of Trade was an unsigned letter on America dated June 1, 1755,<sup>28</sup> which anticipated many of the public discussions of later years. The author begins with a comparison of the French and English colonies in America, and recommends a vigorous prosecution of the military campaigns. England should not be distracted by European issues from the conquest of Canada. The French West Indies would be "an easy purchase for Canada." The anonymous author of this letter anticipated the argument which William Burke was to bring forward in 1761—the possible loss of the American colonies if their hostile neighbours were removed,—

"An objection to a plan of this tendency may arise, my lord, from the projects of independency which a consciousness of growing strength and the annihilation of French power might give birth to, in our American colonies, and therefore a ballance of power between the two peoples there might be more advantageous to the two crowns; but besides the moral impossibility of fixing such an equality of power, by no means the aim or end of the French, an upright and steady government will always have due weight with the bulk of a people, whatever be the practices of some turbulent or ambitious spirits."

The letter goes on to discuss another point of subsequent controversy—the possibility of securing the colonies by military establishment at their own expense—and advances the curious suggestion that Canada should be erected into a Kingdom for Prince Edward. . . . "a greater, more rational and permanent accession of strength to this Kingdom and its Royal family than the wearing of so many crowns by the house of Bourbon, in different parts of Europe can possibly be to that country or to France".

<sup>26</sup> Chatham Papers, volume 95, volume 85 (2).

<sup>27</sup> Chatham Papers, volume 98, section 2.

<sup>28</sup> Chatham Papers, volume 95.

Pitt's first direct correspondent upon the subject of Canada was Mr. Ephraim Biggs, who wrote from Philadelphia on April 2, 1759.<sup>29</sup> Although he is not employed in any position of trust under the Crown; he is impelled to write, he explains, by his concern for the safety of the country and (the reader discovers) by his wish to become the advance agent of a new colony in the western hinterland. His lack of skill in writing is atoned for by his knowledge of conditions on the frontier and by his blunt honesty in stating his views. His argument is mainly a statement of the strategic importance of Canada and the constant menace to the border colonists from French and Indian raids. He was afraid of a partial settlement and the restoration of Quebec while British power was being extended in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. The possession of Louisbourg, though good in itself, could never guarantee the safety of the inland frontiers. Even a line of barrier fortresses would be useless for battered outposts could never protect the colonists from Indian raids. Mr. Ephraim Biggs indulges in an occasional outburst of vigorous indignation against ill-informed gentlemen who presume to write about American affairs. One is tempted to quote from the letter, but it would be impossible to do it justice without giving lengthy extracts.

The most interesting of all the documents in Pitt's collection was sent to him on December 20, 1759, by William Paterson. It consists of a covering letter with an enclosure "Considerations on a future Peace, etc., as it relates to Great Britain only".<sup>30</sup> The author explains in the letter that he has been induced by Granville, and the Marquis of Tweeddale, to submit his conclusions to Pitt. The paper reached Pitt while the subject was actually being discussed, and its writer shows an accurate knowledge of the alternatives and a wise moderation in debating them. Another copy of this paper, signed with initials only, and without the covering letter, is among the Newcastle Manuscripts.<sup>31</sup> Waddington<sup>32</sup> has assumed from the initials that the document was written by Pitt. Mr. Basil Williams in his *Life of Chatham*<sup>33</sup> refers to the document, under the initials only. I have been unable to discover anything more about this William Paterson. One is tempted to look for a family connection between him and William Paterson, the founder of the Bank of England, and originator of the Darien colony, but it has been impossible, as yet, to establish any such connection. The proposition laid down by the author is this: "It is more the interest of Great Britain to extend, improve and secure her colonies and trade in America, than to recover any old or to make any new acquisitions in Europe." Some equivalent must be secured for the money that had been spent upon the war. Let us keep all the French possessions in America, suggests the writer, and so avoid the necessity for settling a long-standing dispute about boundaries. If, however, it should be necessary to restore Quebec and Cape Breton, a boundary should be fixed along the St. Lawrence, the Ottawa, lakes Huron and Michigan, the Illinois River and the Mississippi. It would then be necessary to erect strong fortifications at Crown Point, Albany, Oswego, Niagara and the river St. John, to improve the communications between these points and build fleets on lakes Champlain, Ontario, and Erie. The expense might, in part, be laid upon

<sup>29</sup> Chatham Papers, volume 96.

<sup>30</sup> Chatham Papers, volume 96.

<sup>31</sup> Addit. MSS. 32897, f. 484.

<sup>32</sup> *La Guerre de Sept Ans* (Paris, 1899-1907), III, 540.

<sup>33</sup> Volume II, page 18, note 1.

the colonies themselves, and the increase in trade and revenues would, in all probability, cover the remaining charges. Money laid out in America among their own subjects would return to them either in goods or in remittances—the usual argument of the pamphleteers who favoured northern colonies.

This very brief summary of a few of Pitt's papers will indicate their contents. They might at some time be printed *in extenso*, for they set forth often more vigorously than the pamphlets, the general arguments in favour of retaining Canada, and we know that Pitt read and valued them. Each of them has an individual quality which cannot be displayed in brief extracts. The purposes of this study will have been served if some light has been thrown by them on the dark processes of Pitt's decision. The arguments which moved him were, of course, ideas which appear frequently in the pamphlets. If this had not been true, Pitt would not have been the trusted leader of the merchant public. It is, nevertheless, interesting to notice which arguments he favoured in the general mass of contradictory reasoning, and how much he valued direct knowledge of the situation in America. In every case but one the authors of these documents had lived for a long period in America, and had known, by personal experience, the dangers to which the colonists were exposed. It was characteristic of Pitt to take such men as his advisers, without regard to their connections or scholarly attainments. If all secretaries of state had shown an equal regard for colonial opinion, the disaster of 1776 might have been averted.