

Lord William Wyndham Grenville

Treaty of Navigation and Commerce with
France
(1787)

TREATY OF NAVIGATION AND COMMERCE WITH FRANCE

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Mr. Grenville entered into a general answer to the several objections stated against the Treaty. First of all, he noticed some observations that fell from Mr. Burke. He was happy to hear the [498] right hon. gentleman so eloquently, and so unanswerably describe the capital of this country to be such as would command a preference for our produce and manufactures. To state that the capital of Great Britain was such as to govern, and even to command a possession of market, was certainly the best argument that could possibly be brought in answer to those who had contended that Great Britain would be rivalled in her markets by France in consequence of this Treaty. With this opinion he perfectly coincided. Such was our capital and consequence, that he was assured we should possess every advantage from the Treaty, without France being able to enter into competition with us in any of our markets. With regard to what he had observed relative to the assortments which France would have, from a recourse to our market, and therefore be able to serve America, this certainly was equally in our favour. By our having recourse to her markets, we should be able to obtain assortments, which would enable us to serve countries we could not supply before. Besides, admitting that America would not send us her orders, we should now have an opportunity of serving her through the medium of France. Many avenues of commerce would the Treaty open in this manner. As to the argument respecting Cherbourg, he had only to answer, were we neglectful of availing ourselves of every means to increase our strength and resources of defence? Had we not particularly exerted ourselves to increase our naval defence? Were not our naval stores in the greatest abundance; were not our ships increasing considerably; and was not every method adopted to render our naval strength superior to what it had been known in any former period? An hon. gentleman had stated that the manufacturers of Norwich having approved of the Treaty, could not be considered as any argument in its

favour; for their trade depended chiefly on foreign markets. Surely this was the greatest argument in favour of the Treaty. If they found that it would increase their commerce abroad, it was certainly the greatest proof of the benefit which would accrue to this particular manufacture, This might likewise be applied to many other trades which depended on foreign markets, that would now be opened through the medium of France. The Treaty was an intercourse in which Great Britain must necessarily find her capital, instead of being diminished, increased; for the additional markets which she would possess must certainly tend to increase her profits, and consequently her riches. Means of commerce which we otherwise could never have obtained, we should acquire by this intercourse. While France was endeavouring to extend her markets, we must necessarily extend ours. Under these circumstances it was his decided opinion, that nothing could have been devised more essential to the interests of the country than this connexion with France. By this means the blessings of peace might be prolonged, and the evils of war procrastinated: the means of commerce would be extended, and the resources of the country consequently increased: our manufactures would necessarily flourish, and the nation become prosperous.