

## **‘This immense, and hideous Waste’: A Distant Prospect of Rupert’s Land in 1755**

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Until 1749 all information about Rupert’s Land was a carefully guarded secret of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC). A Parliamentary Inquiry in that year, prompted by criticism of the HBC’s monopoly, made the general public aware of the territory for the first time.

What did the well-informed in England know about Rupert’s Land in the middle of the eighteenth century; or at any rate, what did they think they knew? I report the observations of one of the most able and distinguished among those I shall call the *ordinarily* well-informed, Josiah Tucker (1713-1799). Though his account was privately printed in 1755 it remained unpublished until recently and is still very little known.

### **I The Context**

By royal charter of 1670, Rupert’s Land was defined as ‘all the Landes Countryes and Territoryes upon the Coastes and Confynes of the Seas’ lying within Hudson Strait, that is, the area drained by waters flowing into Hudson and James bays and Hudson Strait. (Ruggles 1984) Under the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713 France ceded Nova Scotia to Britain, and confirmed Britain’s claim to Rupert’s Land. These two territories are thus the oldest British parts of what became the Dominion of Canada in 1867. When Pierre La Vérendrye pursued his explorations

West from the Lake of the Woods in the 1730s he was obliged to keep well South of the what Tucker called ‘The Continent of Hudson’s Bay’.

By 1755 a tiny group of the *exceptionally* well-informed had first-hand knowledge, for they had actually visited or worked in Rupert’s Land for HBC. Henry Kelsey explored the Saskatchewan plains in 1690-92, and Anthony Henday explored to the foothills of the Rockies in 1754 (Ruggles 1984, 152-53). James Knight (c. 1640-1720) was employed by the Company on and off from 1676 to 1700, when he had become rich enough to acquire £400 of HBC stock, was elected to the London Committee, and lived in London as a gentleman. But in 1719 he was requested by the Committee to lead an expedition to discover the North-West Passage, from which he never returned (Dodge 2003). In 1743 James Isham (1743, 1740), a Chief Factor, produced detailed ‘Observations on Hudsons Bay’ together with ‘A Vocabulary of English & Indian’ for the London Committee of the HBC (Rich 1945); and another HBC employee, Joseph Robson (1752) published accounts of life and work in Rupert’s Land from 1733 to 1747. Isham’s assistant at York Factory from 1753 to 1761, Andrew Graham, compiled his own, even more detailed ‘Observations’ over the years 1767 to 1791 (Graham 1969). But except for Robson’s their inside knowledge was jealously protected, and until 1749 shared only with the inner circle of those who governed the Company from London, of whom none but Knight had ever visited the territory.

But in 1749 Parliament launched an investigation into the affairs of HBC in response to repeated criticism of its monopolistic practices by Arthur Dobbs, an influential public servant with the ear of Walpole who eventually became Governor of North Carolina (Rich 1945, pp. lxxvi-ciii; Smith 2018, pp. 82-90), but who had not actually visited Rupert’s Land himself. His *Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson’s Bay* (Dobbs 1744) was largely based on information supplied by the Métis trader Joseph La France. Parliament eventually vindicated the Company – despite petitions from the merchants of many English towns opposed to its monopoly – and confirmed its charter (Smith 2018, pp. 96-98, 100-106).

The controversy attracted national interest, and there seems little doubt that it brought Rupert’s Land and its affairs to the attention of the *ordinarily* well-informed in England for the first time. For though HBC continued its policy of secrecy, sequestering Isham’s detailed and expert ‘Observations’ in its London office for the next two hundred years, other publications

were generated by the affair: parliamentary records which printed excerpts from the Company's records and accounts, the testimony of witnesses for HBC including Isham himself, Dobbs's *Short Narrative* (1749), and Robson's (1752) disgruntled account which tended to confirm the critics of the Company. Postlethwayt's (1751-55) *Universal Dictionary of Trade and Commerce* recycled Dobbs's (1744) *Account* and Robson (1752).

## II The Observer

One of the most notable of the ordinarily well-informed in 1749 was the Revd Josiah Tucker, sometime chaplain to Bishop Joseph Butler, who was then Rector of St Stephen's, Bristol, and who became Dean of Gloucester in 1758. In Bristol Tucker took the lead in public discussion of trade and commerce. He was almost certainly associated with Bristol's anti-HBC petition to Parliament in 1749, and in that year published his first book on political œconomy (Tucker 1749) which was translated into French and read by François Quesnai and his circle of *Économistes*. Adam Smith's friend Jacques Turgot translated two other works of Tucker, and corresponded with him in the 1770s, as had David Hume and Lord Kames somewhat earlier. In 1765 he was a guest of Hume's in Compiègne. Smith had Tucker's economic writings in his library, and though there is no evidence that Smith was influenced by Tucker (Viner 1931), some parts of *Wealth of Nations* look like a vast and judicious elaboration of Tucker's key ideas (Mizuta 1996; Waterman 2001, 2014 Part 2). Karl Marx (1954, Vol. I, p.711, n.2), who was no friend of 'parsons', described Tucker as 'a parson and a Tory, but, for the rest, an honourable man and a competent political economist.' Unlike most Anglican clergymen of that day however, Tucker was not a Tory but a Whig in politics; and he took an active part during the General Election of 1754 and the Bristol Bye-Election of 1756 (Price 2017).

In 1755 Tucker was asked by the Royal Preceptor, the Bishop of Norwich, to compile an instructional guide on commerce and taxation for the seventeen-year old Prince of Wales, later George III. Tucker began a draft but quickly realised that its material was inescapably controversial and therefore that: 'I could not serve my Prince by a liberal and unrestrained discussion' (Tucker 1774, pp. ix-xi, cit. Shelton 1981, p. 89); and he declined the commission. However, he completed the first part of the work, which was privately printed as *The Elements of Commerce and the Theory of Taxes*. A few copies were circulated among Tucker's friends and

correspondents for their criticism and comments. In 1768 Tucker sent Hume one of these, with some other of his economic writings, in order to pass them on to Turgot: but the parcel was lost by the Paris post office (Shelton 1981, p. 171). Only three original copies are now extant: one in private hands, one in the British Museum and one in the New York Public Library, which latter may account for the only two references to this rare work in the scholarly literature (Ford 1894; Clark 1903) until very recently. In 1931 it was reprinted as part of a collection of Tucker's economic and political writing (Schuyler 1931); and the late George Shelton was one of the very few to make use of this in his valuable study of Tucker's economic and political thought (Shelton 1981). Finally, in 1993 Thoemmes Press published *The Collected Works of Josiah Tucker*. Schuyler's edition of *Commerce and Taxes* (Tucker [1755] 1993) was included in Volume III along with *Instructions for Travellers* (1758) and two shorter works from the 1780s.

As an early advocate of free trade, price competition and *laissez-faire*, Tucker was a formidable enemy of private monopolies; and as a staunch upholder of the Glorious Revolution he was opposed to any exercise of the royal prerogative. For each of these reasons the great chartered trading companies of the day – in particular the Turkey Company, East India Company, the HBC and the Royal Africa Company – were targets of vigorous criticism in this book. Pages 140 to 180 of *Commerce and Taxes* are given to 'A Policy for opening those exclusive Companies, which relate to Foreign Trade', of which 166 to 179 are devoted to the HBC. These pages contain a number of allusions to Rupert's Land – which Tucker always called 'Hudson's Bay' or 'The Continent of Hudson's Bay', presumably because of his disapproval of Charles II and Prince Rupert. It is from these unintended bye-products of Tucker's anti-monopoly polemic that we may infer the view of Rupert's Land entertained by the ordinarily well-informed in the aftermath of the 1749 Parliamentary Inquiry.

### **III His Observations**

#### 1. *The Hudson's Bay Company and its products*

166 'another great Monopoly'

168\* '... Furrs, Peltry, &c. to the value of about thirty or forty thousand Pounds.

169 '... Quantities of Furrs and Skins'

170 ‘. . . the Monopolists are violating the NATURAL RIGHTS of Mankind every Day, and were incorporated for that very Intent.’

172 ‘. . . an injurious Monopoly, usurping over the *natural Rights* of Mankind,’

173 ‘. . . should any new Sources of Trade be attempted to be opened, should Fisheries be established, Mines of Lead, Tin, Copper, &c. or Quarries of Marble, or indeed any other Sort of Raw Materials be discovered . . .’

176 ‘Coarse blanketing at Three Guineas *per* Yard!’ [Etc. with other examples of flagrant monopolistic exploitation of natives]

178 ‘. . . this Company shall still be suffered to trample upon our *natural Rights* and Liberties . . .’

## 2. *The territory of Rupert’s Land or ‘The Continent of Hudson’s Bay’*

167 ‘a Country without Bounds or Limits (but which we know for Certainty is about as big as half *Europe*, and how much more we cannot tell) and constituting twenty or thirty private Men the absolute Sovereigns of this immense and hideous Waste.’

170 ‘. . . the Country lies now in a desolate State, in a manner without Inhabitants; and those few being *Savages* for this plain Reason, *because they are so few*.’ [See also 3 below.]

172 ‘If a North-West Passage is ever to be discovered’ it must be done from ‘the Continent of Hudson’s Bay’

173 ‘the very Climate and Situation of Hudson’s Bay would oblige the Inhabitants to purchase the warm, and coarse Woollens . . .’

174 alcoholic liquor imported from Britain ‘would be less noxious in such a Climate than in any other; and though the importers of them in *Africa* and the more Southerly Countries of *America*, are the *certain Murderers* of the Inhabitants, to the no less Detriment of Trade, than Breach of Morals, and Dishonour of Religion; yet they might import them for the use of Fishermen at *Hudson’s Bay* without doing any Injury at all’

174 Rupert’s Land might ‘effectually answer the same Ends to us, which *Siberia* doth for the *Russians*’ [See also 5 below.]

175 ‘*Hudson’s Bay* being a *cold, barren, uninhabited* Country, of an immense Extent, and yet *shut up* on all sides . . . ‘

175 ‘*Hudson’s Bay* is of that prodigious Extent, that if ten thousand [convicts] were transported every Year for an hundred Years to come, the country would in no degree be deemed *populous*:’ [See also 5 below.]

### 3. *Indigenous population*

168\* ‘if these countries were settled, and the Trade extended and improved, by civilizing and incorporating with the Natives, allowing them a more equitable Trade, and carrying up our Manufactures into their Countries by these large and navigable Rivers in Summer, and by Sledges in Winter, and by that means employing more of the Natives in Hunting, and inabling them to become industrious . . .’

169 . . . greater Quantities of Manufactures, in order to tempt the *Indians* by Cheapness and good Usage, to bring down still greater Quantities of Furr and Skins: And it is well-known, that the *Indians* might, and would bring down ten times the Quantities, provided they had proper Incouragement so to do.

170 ‘. . . the Country lies now in a desolate State, in a manner without Inhabitants; and those few being *Savages* for this plain Reason, *because they are so few*;

177 ‘. . . Vanity of Dress is the ruling Passion of these poor People, for their Eagerness after a red Feather, and red Paint, scarce knew any Bounds; and therefore the *honest* Company took advantage of their foible and made them pay accordingly.’

‘. . . what is discovered to be the case in relation to the *Savages* of *Hudson’s Bay*, will be found very similar to the Practice of the good Christians, and polite Inhabitants of *Great Britain*;’

‘. . . by this single Circumstance, the Company have intirely confuted their own Arguments concerning the Laziness, the Indifference, and Inactivity of this People; nay, they themselves have shewn that they do not want a Spirit of Ambition, or Emulation. And therefore if we could touch their Self-Love in a proper Manner, we should soon make them as industrious as other People; that is, they would be as willing to labour as ourselves (for the *Britains* were once such *Savages*) and to exchange the Produce of that Labour for the Produce, or Manufactures of other Countries:’

178 ‘. . . the wise Inhabitants of Great Britain are as much the dupes of [the HBC] as the poor, illiterate *Savages* of *Hudson’s Bay*.’

#### 4. *Colonization*

170 ‘. . . this Country is extremely proper for settling a Colony . . .’

171 ‘this Country is particularly adapted by Nature for the Reception of a British Colony.’

172 ‘If a North-West Passage is ever to be discovered, the settling of a Colony on the Continent of *Hudson’s Bay* is the only Way to do it, and the only Method of appropriating the Use and Benefit of such a Passage to ourselves.’

172 ‘The Highlanders of *Scotland* have every Qualification you could wish to have in the first Settlers of such a Country, Their Highland Dress, their Diet, their Dwellings, Genius, Employments, and Diversions, – all bespeak them the fittest People in the World for such an Undertaking. And therefore the disloyal Clans of the *Camerons, Mac Donalds, Mac Phersons, Mac Cleans, Mac Intoshes, &c. &c.* are very bad neighbours in the Highlands of *Scotland*, yet they would make very useful subjects, and would be a sufficient guard of the Frontiers against the Incroachments of the *French*, if four or five Companies were raised, and sent to the Southern Parts of *Hudson’s Bay*.’

173 ‘in a very little time these people [Highland Scotch settlers], as they can already bear equal Hardship and Fatigue, would acquire the same Dexterity in Hunting, and catching the Beaver, as the Natives themselves: And moreover, as the respective natural Dispositions, Ways of Living, Countries and Climates, are so similar to one another, such new Comers would the more easily intermix, and incorporate with the original Inhabitants. A Circumstance always to be desired in establishing Colonies.

173 ‘ – the *British* Nation is, of all others, the most capable of trading with such a Colony to *mutual* advantage, and consequently of promoting a mutual Interest and beneficial Intercourse.’

#### 5. *Transportation*

174 ‘The *British* Nation are in great want of such a Country as *Hudson’s Bay*, for the purpose of disposing of their numerous Convicts and Malefactors in proper Manner. . . it would effectually answer the same Ends to us, which *Siberia* doth to the *Russians*.’

174 ‘. . . the very Idea of Transportation as a Punishment for Crimes points out this Country, preferably to any other. For Convicts ought not to be sent into a *populous* Country,

where their bad example might corrupt the innocent Natives; nor into a rich, and fertile Country, where they have the same Opportunities, and consequently the same Temptations of returning to their evil Courses, which they had before; neither ought they to be placed in such a Situation, where they may return, almost at Pleasure, to the Mother Country. . .

175 ‘Now Hudson’s Bay being a cold, barren, uninhabited Country, of an immense Extent, yet shut up on all Sides, hath every Qualification that is requisite for making Transportation a real Punishment: And moreover, as all Temptations towards their former Crimes are effectually removed; and there can be no living or subsisting without Industry and Labour, the Persons sent thither would have the best chance in the World of reforming, and becoming Good, – the true End of Punishment; and, I will add, the true Interest of every State to promote. [See also 2.175 above.]

#### **IV Discussion**

What were the geopolitical circumstances in which the information available to Tucker was produced and which conditioned his understanding of that information? What was the evidentiary quality of that information? And what were the assumptions which Tucker brought to his use of that information?

##### *(a) The Geopolitical Circumstances*

The fifty years between the Treaty of Utrecht and the Treaty of Paris in 1763 culminated in the Seven Years War (1756-63): actually the first world war, between France and its allies (the Hapsburg and Russian Empires, Spain and Sweden) and Britain and its allies (Portugal and various German states including Prussia and Hanover), and fought in Europe, North America, South America, the Caribbean islands, the Philippines, India and West Africa. During this half-century Britain replaced France as the dominant maritime, commercial and financial world power. By 1755 the new world order was largely in place; but the eventual defeat of France was not yet certain, and French territorial claims in North America still alive. Despite the legal protection of the Treaty of Utrecht, Rupert’s Land was still vulnerable. Between 1686 and 1713 every one of HBC’s trading posts had been overrun by the French at one time or another, and the Company had a poor record of defending its forts.



Though Tucker had no desire to protect HBC from commercial competition, he regarded Rupert's Land as British territory to be defended against the French. If a colony were to be established and peopled with war-like Scotch Highlanders, they would be 'a sufficient guard of the Frontiers against the Incroachments of the *French*' (4.172). Scottish clans loyal to the British government had been recruited after the 1715 Jacobite uprising in order to pacify the Highlands, and what would become the first Highland regiment, the Black Watch, came into being. After the end of the Jacobite threat in 1746 Highland warriors became useless to their chiefs, and when the Seven Years war began the government decided to recruit further regiments from this pool. The Fraser Highlanders fought in Canada and were important on the Plains of Abraham in 1759. Writing before the start of the war Tucker was prescient in his awareness of the military importance of settling the war-like and formerly disloyal *Camerons, Mac Donalds &c.* where 'they would make very useful subjects' (4.172). Not until the end of that war was there large migration from the Scottish Highlands to British North America, chiefly Nova Scotia. Tucker's conception of a Highland colony in Rupert's Land was not realized until 1812, when Lord Selkirk was able to overcome the long-standing resistance of the HBC – and even then, only in a Southernmost enclave of its territory.

If a colony could be established, Tucker saw, it could provide collateral benefits to the Mother country. It could be a base – the only possible base – for exploration of the North-West Passage and its acquisition as a British possession (4.172). And because of its remoteness and vast scale, Rupert's Land might 'answer the same Ends' to Britain 'which Siberia doth for the Russians' (1.174). Britain was great need of disposing its numerous convicts 'in a proper Manner' (5.174). Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) had vividly portrayed the *improper* manner: sending them to the American colonies where they could indulge their vices freely and return, 'almost at Pleasure' to Britain. But Rupert's Land was so remote, and its climate so rigorous, that convicts would have no option but to work hard and be reformed (5.175).

Fifteen years later however, Captain Cook discovered Botany Bay; and 1788 the first Antipodean penal colony was established in that even more suitable place.

(b) *Tucker's Information*

Some check on the accuracy of Tucker's information may be had by comparing it where possible with Isham's embargoed *Observations*. These chiefly relate to the territory of Rupert's Land and its indigenous population.

There could be no question about the size and extent of this 'Country without Bounds or Limits' (2.167), though Tucker's conjecture that it could easily accommodate a population of at least a million by 1855 (2.175) was without foundation. Isham's remarks about its climate (Rich 1945, pp. 66, 74) – though 'a Very healthfull place, with fine sweet air', yet 'the Dreadfull Long winters here may be Compar'd to the polar parts' – confirm Tucker's view of its Arctic weather (2.173, 174, 175); and it is puzzling that he should have imagined that the traditional dress of the breeless Hielandmen (4.172) could have been suitable in such frigid conditions. But though Isham writes of 'the Vast track of Barren ground' it is hard to know why Tucker should have regarded this 'immense . . . Waste' as 'hideous' (2.167). As to Tucker's optimism about the effect of the 'Climate' in allowing 'The Fishermen at *Hudson's Bay*' to imbibe alcoholic beverages 'without doing any Injury at all' (2.174), Isham's evidence is quite different. Among some of the Company's servants, drunkenness and disorder was frequent (Rich 1945, pp. xxxviii-ix, lix, 215). And among the indigenous there was excessive drinking, drunkenness and consequent violence (pp. 92, 103, 106); 'Brandy, or other Spiritious Liquor's' has been 'the Ruing of a Great many Indians', and only 'the North'rn Indians, Know's not the Effect of Spiritious Liquors yet, therefore are no ways corrupted or Debauch'd' (pp.103, 109).

It is hard to evaluate Tucker's view of Rupert's Land as 'uninhabited' (2.175). Isham notes that the 'Natives are not Very numerous considering the Vast track of Land, they have to range in, we having Seldom comming to the head factory to trade more than 250 cannoes . . . which Contains 550 Inds.' He estimated that in total 'there is comes Yearly to all the English settlements in these parts, or belonging to the Hudsons Bay company a'bout 1200 Indians' (Rich 1945, pp. 91-2). He reported that 'These Natives are often starved and in Want of food' (p. 80); but in that pre-Malthusian epoch it seems not to have occurred either to him or to Tucker that the seemingly small population was simply a consequence of the scantiness of available food. Isham's successor, Andrew Graham, gave a somewhat different view in his detailed reports of the indigenous population a decade or two after 1755, during which little could have changed demographically. He identified five nations comprising 31 tribes in total. Of these the *Keiskatchewan* (= 'Saskatchewan') nation was 'very numerous and divided into many Tribes';

and the *Assinee poet* (= ‘Assiniboine’) nation was ‘more powerful and Numerous than the preceeding’ (Rich 1945, pp. 309-11). Evidently it was only ‘in a manner’ that Rupert’s Land was ‘without Inhabitants’ (2.170).

Tucker’s opinion that Rupert’s Land was ‘particularly adapted by Nature’ for becoming a colony (4.171) directly contradicted Isham’s evidence of 4 May 1749 to the Parliamentary Inquiry, of which Tucker would have been aware: ‘adequate food for subsistence could not be grown, and settlements were therefore impossible on the shores of the Bay’ (Rich 1945, pp. xxxvii, xcix). Perhaps Tucker supposed, not unreasonably, that this was merely HBC propaganda, and preferred the evidence of the pro-Dobbs witness Edward Thompson, a surgeon who had worked for HBC and sailed with Middleton in search of the North-West passage. Thompson claimed that Moose Factory was ‘as proper for beans, pease and barley as some parts of Yorkshire’ (Rich 1945, p. xxxvii).

In one respect at any rate, HBC’s monopolistic exploitation of the indigenous (1.176), Tucker’s information is impeccable, for it was ‘taken from the Company’s own accounts’, viz. the ‘Standard of Trade’, which used the ‘prime beaver pelt’ – with a market value of 9 English shillings – as the unit of account (Tucker [1755] 1993, pp. 176-77). Tucker prints a table of beaver prices which shows the value of one blanket at 7 beavers, a pair of woollen gloves at 1 beaver. ‘And now my good Reader, what think you of such a tax as this! Coarse blanketing at Three Guineas *per* Yard! Woollen Gloves at Nine Shillings *per* Pair!’ Since the blanket had been invented in Bristol in the Fourteenth Century and was still an important part of that city’s trade, Tucker may have been especially interested in this item.

### (c) *Tucker’s Assumptions*

Josiah Tucker was a leading figure of the English Enlightenment, which J. G. A. Pocock (1985) has characterised as ‘conservative, clerical and “magisterial”’. The French Enlightenment was anti-clerical and incipiently anti-religious. I have elsewhere explained why the English Enlightenment was completely different in these respects (Waterman 2004, chap. 2). Yet Tucker shared with his correspondents and associates in Scotland and France characteristic Enlightenment assumptions: about the human condition and human nature, and about political institutions and political œconomy. These are evident in his observations of Rupert’s Land.

The HBC is accused of ‘violating the NATURAL RIGHTS of Mankind’ (1.170, 173), by which Tucker meant that when monopolistic trading corporations are sanctioned by law, ‘other Men have their *Rights* taken from them, and are denied the Liberty of being useful to themselves’ (Tucker [1755] 1993, p. 58). Moreover, since every monopoly exists to levy a private purchase-tax on its customers for which it provides no value, it is thereby guilty of theft. A recent study has argued that political economy was such a powerful force in the eighteenth century that ‘it came to define enlightenment across the transatlantic world’ (Robertson 2007, cit. Price 2016); and Tucker’s relentless attack on the HBC is only a cruder and more polemical example of this than was Adam Smith’s detailed and judicious critique of exclusive companies in foreign trade (*WN* IV.vii.c: 97-108).

Two other, related Enlightenment assumptions which informed Tucker’s observations of Rupert’s Land were the uniformity of human nature, and the manner in which humans are motivated by self-love.

Adam Smith’s famous comparison of ‘a philosopher and a common street porter’ suggested that their difference ‘seems to arise not so much from nature, as from habit, custom and education’ (*WN* I.ii.4). Tucker took this for granted and assumed its generalisation to all humans everywhere. He also shared Smith’s assumption that all humans everywhere are motivated by *self-love* (*WN* I.ii.2-3); and here he himself had made an important contribution – following the classic exposition of his mentor the great Joseph Butler – by vindicating self-love, tainted by association with Mandeville’s ‘vice’, as fully consistent with Christianity (Waterman 2004, pp. 109-112; Price 2016, pp. 98-103, 172-75; Price 2017). These assumptions informed Tucker’s view of the indigenous population of Rupert’s Land.

The official HBC view of ‘the Laziness, the Indifference, and Inactivity of this People’ (3.177) is consistent with Isham’s unflattering observations. Gluttonous, insanitary and verminous, with no sense of time, they were ‘a crafty sort of people, cheating, Stealing, and Lying they glory in and Lude’ from their cradle; being prone to all manner of Vices’ (Rich 1945, p. 80; and pp. 75-104 passim). Tucker had no Romantic view of the noble savage. But nor did he believe that the natives were permanently doomed to the savage state because of ineradicable specific characteristics. All human beings are human beings (and, he would have added in his pulpit, Children of Adam). However, the indigenous are indeed ‘savage’ for the ‘plain Reason, *because they are so few*’ (3.170): a large population is a condition of the economy and culture of

civilised (i.e. commercial) society. Though the indigenous are as rational as the rest of us, and quite as much driven by self-love, the structure of incentives available to them is perverse. But the ‘single Circumstance’ that they were willing to trade 16 beavers for a pound of vermillion in order to gratify their ‘Eagerness after a red Feather, and red Paint’ (3.177) completely confutes the Company’s own arguments, for it shows that the indigenous ‘do not want a Spirit of Ambition, or Emulation’ (3.177): and they are willing to incur very high labour costs in order to gratify their tastes. Therefore, if we could harness ‘their Self-Love in a proper manner’ they would eventually ‘be as willing to labour as ourselves’ (3.177). Tucker’s recognition that ‘the Britains were once such savages’ (3.177) makes it luminously clear that he understands human economy and culture, always and everywhere, to be created by the same universal human characteristics of rationality and self-love, operating in a world of limited resources.

If the territory were to be settled as a colony, trade could be ‘extended and improved, by civilizing and incorporating with these natives, allowing them a more equitable trade’, encouraging them to import British manufactures into their tribal lands by water in Summer and sledge in Winter, giving the natives more employment possibilities and ‘inabling them to become industrious’ (3.168\*). By ‘incorporating’, Tucker meant becoming one with us by intermarriage. Because the Scotch Highlanders so closely resemble the natives in their ‘natural Dispositions’ (Tucker supposed), they would soon come to equal them in hunting game and catching beaver’ (4.173); and they could ‘the more easily intermix, and incorporate with the original Inhabitants’, which he thought was ‘always to be desired’ (4.173).

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