

An Advocate of English Colonization

Richard Hakluyt



OVERVIEW

Richard Hakluyt, English geographer and writer on voyages of discovery, was a promoter of colonization in the Americas. "Planting" colonies, he suggested, would help correct unemployment and economic hard times in England and supply raw materials for manufacturers and new markets for their products. This tract is dated January 5, 1607, eight months after King James I granted the charter for the colony of Virginia.

GUIDED READING As you read, consider the following questions:

- How does Richard Hakluyt try to persuade the king that a royal charter rather than private funds are needed for colonizing the Americas?
 - Why does Hakluyt think private ventures are flawed?
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REASONS OR MOTIVES for the raising of a public stock to be employed for the peopling and discovering of such countries as may be found most convenient for the supply of those defects which this Realm of England most requires:

1. All kingdoms are maintained by rents or trade, but especially by the latter, which in maritime places flourishes the most by means of navigation.
2. The Realm of England is an island impossible to be otherwise fortified than by strong ships and able mariners, and is secluded from all corners with those of the main continent; therefore, fit abundance of vessels should be prepared to export and import merchandise.
3. The furniture of shipping consists in masts, cordage, pitch, tar, resin, and that of which England is by nature unprovided; at this present time it enjoys them only by the favor of a foreign country.
4. The life of shipping rests in the number of able mariners and worthy captains, which cannot be maintained without assurance of reward of honorable means to be employed for their adventures.
5. Private sources are cold comforts to adventurers and have ever been found fatal to all enterprises hitherto undertaken by the English because of delays, jealousies, and unwillingness to back that project which did not succeed the first time.
6. The example of the Hollanders is very [germane], for a main backing or stock has effected marvelous matters in trade and navigation in a few years.
7. It is honorable for a state to back an exploit by a public [corporation] rather than a private monopoly.

8. Where colonies are founded for a public-weal, they may continue in better obedience and become more industrious than where private men are absolute backers of a voyage. Men of better behavior and quality will engage themselves in a public service, which carries more reputation with it, than a private, which is for the most part ignominious in the end, because it is presumed to aim at a profit and is subject to rivalry, fraud, and envy, and when it is at the greatest height of fortune can hardly be tolerated because of the jealousy of the state.

9. The manifest decay of shipping and mariners and of many borough and port towns and harbors cannot be relieved by private increase nor amended otherwise than by a voluntary consent of many purses of the public.

10. It is publicly known that trade with our neighbor countries is beginning to be of small request, the game seldom answering the merchants' adventure, and foreign states either have already or at this present time are preparing to enrich themselves with wool and cloth of their own which they heretofore borrowed of us, which purpose of theirs is now being achieved in France, as it already has been done in Spain and Italy. Therefore, we must, of necessity, forgo our great showing if we do not wish to prepare a place fit for the vent of our wares and so set our mariners to work, who daily run to serve foreign nations for want of employment and cannot be restrained by any law when necessity forces them to serve in the hire of a stranger rather than to serve at home.

11. That realm is more complete and wealthy which either has the sufficiency to serve itself, or can find the means to export its natural commodities, than if it has occasion necessarily to import, for, consequently, it must ensue that by public consent a colony transported into a good and plentiful climate able to furnish our wants, our moneys, and wares, that now run into the hands of our adversaries or cold friends, shall pass unto our friends and natural kinsmen and from them likewise we shall receive such things as shall be most available to our necessities. This intercourse of trade may rather be called a homebred traffic than a foreign exchange.

12. Foreign nations yearly attempt discoveries in strange coasts, moved thereunto by the policy of the state which affects that gain most which is gotten either without any trick of their neighbor, or at best by the smallest advantage that may turn unto them by their trade.

13. Experience teaches us that it is dangerous to our state to enterprise a discovery and not to proceed therein even to the very sifting of it to the utmost. For not only disreputation grows thereby but disability and weak power reveals our own idleness and want of counsel to manage our enterprises, as if the glorious state of ours were rather broached by the virtue of our ancestry than of our own worthiness.

14. The want of our fresh and present supply of our discoveries has in a manner taken away the title which the law of nations gives us unto the coast first found out by our industry, forasmuch as whatsoever a man relinquishes

may be claimed by the next finder as his own property. Neither is it sufficient to set foot in a country but to possess and hold it, in defense of an invading force (for want whereof) the king of Denmark intends to a northwest voyage (as it is reported). It is also reported that the French intend to inhabit Virginia, which they may safely achieve if their second voyage proves strong and there does not languish for want of sufficient and timely supplies, which cannot be had but by the means of a large contribution.