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INDIAN TRACTS.

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Condition of the Indian
Trade in North America,
1767, as described in a
letter to Sir William
Johnson

BY

SIR GUY CARLETON,
GOVERNOR OF CANADA.

Lord Carleton

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NOTE.

THIS letter is printed from the original manuscript in the possession of Mr. Gordon L. Ford.

PAUL LEICESTER FORD,

97 Clark St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

QUEBEC 27th March 1767.

SIR: I received the Favor of your Letter of the 27th of January, and shall allways think myself obliged to you for informing me of any irregularities committed by Persons from this Province, as by that information I may be enabled to take such Steps here, as may correct them for the future, and assist you in your Endeavors to prevent all Cause of Discontent to the Indians from hence: in Return I will communicate to you the Complaints which I receive here, as I imagine that mutual Information must be of Advantage to His Majesty's Service, whose Intentions are, that His Servants should promote the Good of all his subjects, as well as prevent any just Cause of discontent, to those under his Protection—

That the French who must always be our Rivals in Trade, often our open Enemies, should take every Opportunity of gaining the Affection of the Indians, and of misrepresenting us, I expect as a Thing of Course; it belongs to us to defeat their Endeavours, whether fair or fraudulent, and by wise Regulations, honest dealing, and by Kind Treatment to attach them to us, and avail ourselves of those extensive Channels of Trade, to enlarge our Commerce to the utmost—

Your Complaints of the Canadians, by which Name I distinguish the Subjects of the King our Master, acquired by the Conquest of this Province, are so general, that I can only make my Enquiries, and speak to them in as general a Manner; When I talk here of that Perfidy, false Stories, or Views of exciting an Indian War, you complain of, they appeal to Colonel Glad-

wyn, and all the rest of our officers, who were Spectators of the last, and are confident these will give Testimony of different dispositions in them at that Time, when such Views might have been more excusable, than at present, and that even then some of them were utterly ruined by the Indians for their Attachment to us; they very plainly shew me, that such a War must be very destructive to them, and in Case of such a Misfortune, that they then did, and would again cheerfully take up Arms, to reduce them to Peace, by Force. Ever since my Arrival, I have observed the Canadians with an Attention, bordering upon Suspicion, but hitherto have not discovered in them either Actions or Sentiments, which do not belong to good Subjects. Whether they are right or wrong in their Opinion of the Indian Trade, I submit to those whom

the King has appointed to direct and superintend the same, but the unanimous Opinion of all here, Canadians and British, is, that unless the present Restraints are taken off, that Trade must greatly Suffer, This Province be nearly ruined, Great Britain be a considerable Loser, and France the sole Gainer, as they must turn the greatest Part of the Furs down the Mississippi, instead of the St. Lawrence; they compute that a very large Quantity of Merchandise, formerly passed through this Province to Nations unknown to Pondiac, and too distant to come to any of our Ports, and that so much is lost of the Consumption of British Manufactures. They say that their own Interests will always be a sufficient Reason and Motive to treat these People well, and to use their utmost Endeavours to keep them in Peace, and the Canadians will engage

to take some English with them in every Canoe, to acquire a knowledge of these Countries and the Language, to shew they have no Jealousy at their becoming acquainted with this Trade; Tis imagined here, that the other Provinces, who are neither acquainted with these Countries, nor so advantageously situated for this Trade are the secret Causes of their being so severely fettered; they presume to think each Province should be permitted to avail itself of it's natural Situation, and acquired Advantages, and that it should be as unreasonable in us to expect the Ports to the Southward should be shut up by Regulations, as long as ours are by a severe Climate; that in this Respect all the King's Subjects should be considered as Brothers, or one Family, and, that the Rivalship ought not to be between Province and Province, but between

the King's Subjects and those of France and Spain ; some have offered to prove, that two Years ago, while they were confined to the Fort, the French or Spaniards from the Mississippi came within twenty Leagues of the Detroit, and carried off the very Furs, that were intended to clear off the Credit given the Indians the year before. They even assert tis impossible to prevent them from carrying off by far the greatest Part of that Trade, unless those Restraints are taken off; they maintain that the only possible Means of removing the Discontents of the Indians, for not being supplied with the Necessaries of Life as formerly, is to permit them to go among them, as was the Practice of this Colony, that thereby they will be enabled to undersell the Mississippi Traders, detect their Artificies, and be the Means of bringing them to Punish-

ment, as it is their Interest and Duty so to do ; but supposing the worst of them, they hope the King's Subjects of Canada are as much to be trusted, as the French from New Orleans, and ought to have the Preference, considering they carry up the British Manufactures only. I have also had many Complaints of the Partiality and Violence of some Comissaries, but as I find by your Letters to Lieutenant Colonel Massey, you are already informed of them, I will not trouble you with a Repetition, not doubting but they will be properly punished, if they are found guilty ; the British in particular request, that for the future these may all be obliged to give security for their good Behaviour, while in that Employment, that should they commit any Injustice, Partiality, or Violence, they may know how to recover proper Damages in a regular Course of Law ;

this they think the more reasonable, as they on their Side give Bond to observe the King's Regulations, which, if they do amiss, subjects them to suffer for it in the same Way, and not to be left to the Mercy of a Comissary, or of those Indians he may Hullo after them. They begged of me to let them have a Copy of those Regulations, they give Security to obey, and that I would not leave them to the Information of a Comissary in those distant Parts, of whose Partiality they have already seen many Proofs, by suffering many to go out and trade abroad, they suspect for value received, while the rest were confined to the Fort; That whatever was the King's Pleasure, they would submit to, but still it became necessary to be apprised thereof, as they must considerably lessen the Quantity of Merchandise for these Parts, and not be obliged to

have them packed up, and lodged in a Warehouse without, willingly submitting to let all be confiscated, if they sold for one farthing, rather than bring them to a small Market in the Fort, exposed to all Accidents of Fire; this some of them preferred and practiced at the Detroit. Had I those Regulations, I would have given them a Copy, but I am as yet uninformed of them—

General Gage acquainted me you complain to him of seven Persons who are among the Indians without Passports, namely, *Capucin, Lorain, La Motte, Pot de Vin, Bartholomé, Bergeron,* and *Richarville*; The six last are Canadians and have been settled among the Miamis and Ouias from fifteen to twenty years, except *Pot de Vin*, who has been settled as long at Detroit, but I can give you no certain Account of *Capucin*, who is also

among the Miamis; it is supposed that is not his real Name, but a fictitious one, to conceal that of his Family—

I have given some Presents to the Indians who came to see me at Montreal, as I find it was customary on the like Occasions, and think that Attention to them must have good Consequences—

I am with Regard Sir

Your most obedient

Humble Servant

GUY CARLETON.

SIR WILLIAM JOHNSON, Bart.

*Superintendent of Indian Affairs in the
Northern District—*

