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A
L E T T E R
TO THE
West-India MERCHANTS,
In ANSWER to their
P E T I T I O N
Now before the
Hon^{ble} HOUSE of COMMONS,
Praying for a
PROHIBITION of the TRADE
Carried on from the
NORTHERN COLONIES,
TO THE
FRENCH and *DUTCH*
West-India SETTLEMENTS.

By a FISHERMAN.

L O N D O N :

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A
L E T T E R

TO THE

West-India Merchants, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

IT is with Reluctance that I attempt to address you in this Manner, being sensible how much I shall expose my Abilities by appearing in Public; but the Justness of the Cause I would undertake; The Unreasonableness of your Petition now before the *Honourable House of Commons*, Praying a *Prohibition of the Trade carried on from the Northern Colonies, to the French and Dutch*

Dutch West-India *Settlements* ; The indecent Reflections you have therein cast upon the *Northern Colonies* ; The unjust Light you have set that Trade in, with the Consequences thereof ; And, the *little Modesty* with which you are pushing this Affair, loudly calls for some Check to your Proceedings ; Therefore, having impatiently waited, in Hope that some of my Countrymen (many of whom could have made a much better Appearance, in this Respect, than I am capable of doing) would have resenting this unjust Treatment of your's, in representing *all the Northern Colonies*, as nothing but *the Agents of France, and other foreign Nations* ; but finding they have hitherto declined it, and being apprehensive many worthy Persons, thro' your partial Representation of this Affair, may be led into Errors, and entertain wrong Sentiments of the People in those Colonies (whose Affections to his present Majesty, and the Interest of *Great-Britain*, I am very certain, are equal

equal to any other of his Subjects) I presume to make a few short Observations on your Proceedings, and shall endeavour to point out, to every unprejudiced Person, the Arts you have made Use of, and the Subterfuges you are obliged to have Recourse to, in order to support your exorbitant Scheme (which, by the Way, I am informed by some of your Countrymen, you now repent, and would be glad to get rid of) and, then shew you, that you are quite mistaken, respecting the Consequences of the Trade carried on by the *Northern Colonies* with the *French and Dutch West-India Settlements* ; and, that instead of its being prejudicial to the Interest of *Great-Britain*, the *taking off* the Duties already laid thereon, would tend vastly to *her* Advantage, by promoting the Exports of her Manufactures to the *Northern Colonies* ; which, in Consequence of a *Prohibition*, must very sensibly decrease, and in Time come to nothing.

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First then, *Gentlemen*, respecting your Application to the *Lords of Trade* on this Affair : What were your Proceedings before them ? Why, having got hold of several Letters from a few Merchants in some of the *Northern Colonies*, &c. relating to a Vessel or two that went to *Holland*, whose whole Cargoes did not amount to a thousand Pounds each, and two or three others that went as Flags of Truce to the *French Islands*, under Cover of which, they purchased a Cargo of Molosses, for the Consideration of a few Quintals, and Barrels of Fish : You proceeded to blacken the whole Continent, without Exception, as a Pack of Smugglers, that want nothing but a little Encouragement to the discarding their Mother Country, &c. And because you could prove that there were a few Persons in those Colonies who did not pay the Duty of such Molosses, therefore you insisted, that that Trade was highly prejudicial to *Great-Britain*,

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Britain, and ought to be *Prohibited*. Yet, when their *Lordships* examined the Evidences you brought respecting the Quantity of Molosses made in the *British West-India Islands*, it appeared, that all of them together, did not export *twelve thousand Hogsheads*, and that you never had any left upon your Hands.

Secondly, How much Art and Pains did you make Use of, to prove that now and then a Vessel from the *Northern Colonies* traded with you, the Masters of which would not take Rum, Sugar, or Molosses, for their Cargoes, but insisted on your paying them in Cash, with which they would buy those Commodities elsewhere ? Could not you have been frank and open, and told their *Lordships*, that the true Reasons of it were, because those Persons could go to your next Neighbour, and buy the same Articles ten or fifteen *per Cent.* cheaper ; or, perhaps, to the next Island, and get them a *third Part* cheaper, and not

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because they did not want those Articles. You know, Gentlemen, that within these fifteen Years, you have given above *double* the Price for Lumber that you *now* do, and at the same Time sold your Rum and Moloffes for less than *half* what you *now* get for it; and that at this present Day, you do not give the *Northern Colony* People the *first Cost* for what you buy of them: But I know the relating of these Things will not be agreeable to you, therefore I proceed to another little Art you made Use of, to blacken the *Northern Colonies* in the Eyes of their *Lordships*, and that was, that the People in those Colonies sent their Vessels to those foreign Islands, under a Pretence of getting Moloffes, and there purchased *East-India* Goods, &c. But this, Gentlemen, is another of your Fallacies, which will serve well enough to blind the Eyes of Persons that are not acquainted with the Truth of these Things; you yourselves know too well the Nature of the Trade carried on from
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the *Northern Colonies* to *St. Eustatia* (the Place you named) to believe that this is currently the Case; for you must acknowledge, that there is not *One* Vessel in *Ten* that goes from the *Northern Colonies* to your Islands, whose Cargoes, neat, are sufficient to purchase even a Load of *Moloffes*, of the Value of *four or five hundred* Pounds; and not *one* out of *twenty* that ever purchases a *Penny-worth* of *dry Goods*; but if, by Accident a Master of a Vessel has *forty or fifty* Pounds more than he can lay out in Moloffes, and should purchase a few Pieces of Duck, or *Quoils* of Rigging, which is the most they do in this Way; What mighty Smuggling is that? Yet where one Person lays out such a *Sum* in dry Goods, there are ten who carry Home the Produce of their Cargoes in Silver or Gold.—And that they sometimes are forced to carry Home Silver and Gold, because they *cannot get Rum, Sugar, and Moloffes*, one of your own Evidences let drop before their *Lordships*; at which,

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and many other Things that came out there by Accident, I could perceive an Anxiety arise in some of your Countenances; and observed, that when a Witness did not fully answer your Purpose, he was pulled by the Coat and desired to desist: These Things are Fact, Gentlemen, and you know it.

Much of the same Nature with the above-mentioned Trade, is that, you would misrepresent the *Northern Colonies*, as carrying on to *Marseilles*, and *Toulon*, save, that I verily believe, not *ten* Sail of Vessels from the *Northern Colonies*, have been at either of those Places for these *ten Years* past; and when, by Accident, at any Time a Vessel was sent with such a Cargo as you mention, of Oil, Pitch, Tar, Furs, Timber, Logwood, Spars, Oaks, &c. yet the whole Quantities together, scarce ever produced 500 *l.* out of which the Vessels Charges were to be paid, and a Load of Salt to be purchased in the first Place,
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and then let the World judge what a mighty Quantity of those Articles you pretend they carried back for Return, (as Velvets, Silks, Gold, and Silver-Lace, &c. &c.) the Remainder of her Cargo would purchase; these Things I know, Gentlemen, to be Fact, and if the Persons you produced as Evidences on these Points, would acknowledge the *whole Truth*; I am apprehensive it would amount to no more than this, that the Masters of some such Vessels, may have sometimes with their own private Adventure of the Value of *forty* or *fifty Pounds*, purchased a Piece of Velvet, with a Pattern of Silk for a Gown, and several of these small Articles you have enumerated, for some Friend or other; this I am satisfied is pretty near the Extent of the mighty Smuggling-Trade carried on from the *Northern Colonies* to *Marseilles* and *Toulon*; therefore, Gentlemen, be frank and acknowledge, that you have raised up these Stories, *only to blacken the Northern Colonies* in the Eyes
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of their Mother Country, that you may with the more Ease obtain your unreasonable Desires, in having the *Northern Colonies* wholly excluded from any Benefit, by carrying on a Trade with the *French* and *Dutch* in the *West-Indies*, in order that *yourselves* may enjoy the *Whole* of it by Smuggling; for that you at present have a good Share thereof, is evident by your own Confessions, *that great Quantities of Foreign Sugars are cleared out from the English Islands as British Manufacture*, and that no such Sugars are ever shipped in the *Northern Colony Vessels*, is a Fact you cannot deny; therefore I apprehend from your Behaviour, you now begin to find, that you have pushed this Matter without a thorough Consideration of its Consequences, and have no other Way of getting off of it, but by throwing the Dirt you have created upon the *Northern Colonies*, as your *late Piece*, which you industriously spread with so much Caution on the 21st Instant, when you expected your Petition before

before the Honourable *House of Commons* would have been heard, intituled, *A short View of the Smuggling-Trade carried on by the Northern Colonies, &c.* sufficiently testifies.

Again; what a pompous Title have you affixed to your Petition before the Honourable *House of Commons*, viz. *The Petition of the Merchants in London, in general, and of the British Sugar Planters, Merchants, and others, whose Names are hereunto subscribed, in Behalf of themselves, and all others trading to and interested in his Majesty's Sugar Colonies.*

Pray Gentlemen, let me ask you, how many Merchants are there in *London*? Every one that reads your Petition, must understand by the Word *general*, that the greatest Number of them (separated from all that Trade to, or have any Interest in his Majesty's Sugar Colonies) had signed that Petition; but, if I am not misinformed, there is scarce

scarce one single Person signed it, but what has some Interest or other connected with those Islands; and, to my certain Knowledge, some of the most considerable *West-India* Merchants, who have large Plantations in several of those Islands, and whose Interests are greatly connected with the Trade thereof, not only refused to sign your Petition, but have used their Endeavours to prevent such an unreasonable Request being preferred to the *Honourable House of Commons*, well knowing it to be highly against the Interest of *Great-Britain*, and that in the End it would not be of any Service to his Majesty's Sugar Islands: And this leads me to point out the real Consequences of the Trade carried on from the *Northern Colonies*, to the *French* and *Dutch West-India* Settlements, which being an Affair of so much Consequence, respecting the *Interest of Great-Britain*, and is now coming on before the *Parliament*, where it will be *impartially* and *maturely* considered, I shall have

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no Occasion, at present, of being so very particular, in order to convince you of your Mistake, and to make it appear, to every true Lover of his Country, in that Light he would wish to find it. In the Prosecution of this, I apprehend there are several Things to be enquired into.

First, What *Sort* of Manufactures, and what *Value* are exported from *Great-Britain* to the *British Sugar Islands*, in Proportion to what she Exports to the *Northern Colonies*?

Secondly, What *Returns* does *Great-Britain* receive in Lieu of what she Exports to the *British Sugar Islands*, and what becomes of those Returns?

Thirdly, What *Sort* of Manufactures, and what *Value* does *Great-Britain* export to the *Northern Colonies*, in Proportion to what she Exports to the *British Sugar Islands*?

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Fourthly, What Returns does *Great-Britain* receive in Lieu thereof, and what becomes of them?

Fifthly, How does the Trade carried on from the *Northern Colonies* to the *French* and *Dutch West-India Settlements*, affect *Great-Britain*?

Sixthly, What End will a *Prohibition* of this Trade carried on from the *Northern Colonies* to the *French* and *Dutch Settlements* serve, and how will it affect *Great-Britain*?

Seventhly, What End will the *taking off* the *Duties* already laid on this Trade carried on from the *Northern Colonies* serve, and how would it affect *Great-Britain*?

Lastly, Would the preventing the *Northern Colonies* from carrying on this Trade to the *French* and *Dutch West-India*

Settlements, be of any real Disadvantage to *their* Sugar Trade, and could the *French* supply themselves with Fish and Lumber without the Assistance of the *Northern Colonies*?

If, upon answering all these Questions, it be made to appear, (as I doubt not but it will) that the Trade carried on from the *Northern Colonies* to the *French* and *Dutch West-India Settlements*, is a *beneficial* One to *Great-Britain*, and that the Duties she has lain upon that Trade, are a Clog and Hinderance to it; I doubt not but every real Friend she has, will wish to see them taken off.

In answer then to the *first Enquiry*, I say, That, at least *two Thirds* of the Manufactures exported from *Great-Britain* to the *British Sugar Islands*, are what she Imports from Foreigners; and that the *Whole* put together, does not amount to *one Half* the Value she exports to the *Northern Colonies*.

To the *Second*, I answer, That they are chiefly Sugars, and the Price of them fo high, that none of them can be exported, but are all consumed by herself.

To the *Third*, That *three quarter Parts* of the Manufactures *Great-Britain* exports to the *Northern Colonies*, are of her own Make, and that she exports to those Colonies above double the Value that she does to the *British Sugar Islands*.

Fourthly, I answer, Cash, and Bills of Exchange, for almost all the Fish exported to *Spain* and *Portugal*; together with Naval Stores, Logwood, Furs, &c. great Part of which *Great-Britain* exports again to her Advantage.

Fifthly, Inasmuch as it serves to encourage the *Northern Colonies* in catching of Fish, making Oil, and cutting of Lumber, &c. this supplies then in a great Measure with Returns to *Great-Britain*
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for her Manufactures, for Want of which, those Colonies could not take off near the Quantity they now do, as they have no other Way of paying for them; consequently, if a Stop should be put to that Trade of theirs with the *French* and *Dutch West-India Settlements*, they would be necessitated to set up the *Manufactory* of *Great-Britain* among themselves, to her very great Detriment.

Sixthly, Only to encourage the *British Sugar Islands*, in Distilling up all the coarse Sugars they now send to *Great-Britain* into Rum, which they will dispose of to the *Northern Colonies* on their own Terms, by which Means not above *two Thirds* the *Rum* and *Sugar* will come to *Great-Britain* that now does, consequently the Price of what does come, will be proportionably inhaunced, and serve no other Purpose but to enable these *West-India* Gentlemen, instead of making their Fortunes in *five* or *six* Years, which they now do, to make them in
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two or three; for it is asserted by very good Judges, that the *Rum* and *Molasses* they sell, pays the Charges of the *Plantations*, and that the *Sugar* is all Profit.

Seventhly, This would give the *Northern Colonies* further Encouragement to out-rival the *French* in the *Fish Trade*, (especially in the *West-Indies*) and enable them to make larger Remittances for the Manufactures of *Great Britain*, and thereby increase her Trade.

Lastly, As this Question seems to be the darling Hinge of the *West-India* Gentlemen, I shall be a little more Particular in answering it.

It is a certain Fact, that the *French* in the *West-Indies*, sell their Sugars from forty to fifty per Cent. cheaper than the *English* do; therefore, if they had no Vent for their *Molasses*, but were obliged to throw it away, as these Gentlemen pretend they would; altho' to my certain

tain Knowledge, a great Number of *French* Vessels go yearly to *Canada*, wholly loaded with *Rum*, which is made out of it, (for the *Northern Colonies* seldom or ever take any of their *Rum* or *Sugar*) yet, as it produces them such a Trifle, they selling it for one Third the Price that it is sold for in the *British Islands*, the Addition of two or three per Cent. on their Sugars at the Foreign Markets, (where they are not in any Danger of ever being rival'd by the *English*, as it is not in our Power ever to raise the Quantities of Sugar the *French* does) would fully make up for it; besides, there needs no stronger Argument to prove, that the *French* do not look upon the Trade from the *Northern Colonies* as beneficial to them, (notwithstanding these Gentlemen affirm, that the *French* do all in their Power to encourage it,) then, their prohibiting it under the severest Penalties, the *West-India* Gentlemen know that this is true, and that one Half this Trade

Trade with the *French* is smuggled, as well in the *French Islands* as in the *British Islands*.

With respect to the *French* being able to supply themselves with *Lumber*, I think it is beyond Dispute that they may, (Fish no-body can deny but that they catch at a cheaper Rate than the *English* do,) and the Quantities of *Lumber* they take from the *English* are trifling, as one of the *West-India* Gentlemen declared upon Examination before the *Lords of Trade*, they having the same Sort of Trees grow both in *Canada* and *Messasippa*, that do in the *Northern Colonies*, and the only Reason they do not cut them is on Account of the Navigation's being something more difficult, which would perhaps make the *Lumber* turn out at a higher Price than they give the *English*; but, suppose the *French Planters* were obliged to give double the Price for it to what they do at present to the *English*, yet it would be giving of it to their own People, and the Addition of two or three per Cent. more

more on their Sugars would make up for it; *Mill-Timber*, *Staves*, and *Heading*, are the natural Growth of *Hispaniola*, where they always use them; at *Martinico*, the most of the *Staves* and *Hoops* they use there, are brought them from *Old-France*.

I hope it now appears from what has been said, that the Trade carried on from the *Northern Colonies* to the *French* and *Dutch West-Indies*, is a very beneficial one to *Great-Britain*, and of no real Detriment to the *British Sugar Islands*, inasmuch as they do not Want any Encouragement for making *Rum*, *Sugar*, or *Molasses*; for, in my Opinion, the Gentlemen who live in those *Islands*, exceed all other Subjects of the *British* Government, both for Dispatch in getting *Estates*, and also in spending them: That therefore, if the *Facts* here stated, should upon Examination prove true, as
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I am satisfied *they* will, the *Legislature* in their great Wisdom will reject the Petition of these *West-India* Gentlemen, and instead of *prohibiting* the Trade of the *Northern Colonies*, *take off the Duties already laid thereon.*

Upon the Whole, Gentlemen, and to conclude, give me Leave *on Behalf of the Northern Colonies, and all others trading to, or interested therein,* to make this Proposal to you, That you would withdraw this said Petition of yours now before the Honourable *House of Commons*, and join the Agents of the *Northern Colonies* in petitioning the Parliament, that they would be pleased to *take off the present Duty on Foreign Rum, Sugar, and Molosses,* imported into the *Northern Colonies*; and *pray*, that however difficult a Task it may seem, such further Measures as they shall think expedient, may be taken to put a *final Stop* to the Traffick

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fick, which *these Agents of France* are carrying on to the Ports of *Holland* *Marseilles* and *Toulon*, and among the many thousand *New-England* Men that will join you, shall be

Your most humble Servant,

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