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Mr. Phipps

SPEECH

TO A

COMMITTEE

OF THE

Honourable House of Commons,

Concerning the

AMERICAN Trade,

March the 27th 1712.



LONDON:

Printed by H. Parker, in Salisbury Court,
Fleet-street, 1712.

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Mr. Phipps's S P E E C H.

Mr. CHAIRMAN,

THE *African Trade* might be made, the most Valuable Trade this Nation ever had. That it is so in the Nature of it, in respect of the *Gold Mines*, and rich Commodities of that Country, and much more in its consequence; In respect of the usefulness of the *Negroes*, to our *British Plantations*, the *Traders* all agree. They differ only about the Management, how this Trade may be carried on to the best Advantage of our *British Nation*, and this is a Matter of so great Importance, that the Welfare and Prosperity of our *British Colonies* intirely depend upon it.

I have been an Old Trader to the *Plantations*, and Acquainted With the *African Trade* more then 30 Years. In *King Charles the Second's Time*; I was an Interloper in that Trade, afterwards, I came into the joynt Stock of the *Royal African Company*, and am now Cleer of both; but knowing how much the Interest of *Great Britain* is Concern'd, in the right Settlement of this Uncommon Trade, I Humbly beg leave to sett it before you in a true Light, that this Honorable House may not be Surprised nor imposed on, by the Fallacies of the Contending parties about it.

The Contenders for this Trade, are the *Royal African Company* on one hand, and Particular and sepe- rate Traders on the other; The one Clames it, by

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Virtue of a *Charter* granted them, from *King Charles II.* The other as their *Birth-right*, they being Free Born Subjects of *Great Britain*.

The *African Company* say, this Trade cannot be preserv'd to our *British Nation*, withour *Forts, Castles*, and *British Settlements* in *Guinea*, that these *Forts and Castles* cannot be supported and maintain'd but by an *United Company* in a joynt Stock, Neither can the Trade be carried on, to the best Advantage of our *British Nation* without exclusive Priviledges, for that the Natives of *Guinea* are a Wild Savage, and uncivilized People, which differ little from Bruites, but in Figure, Speech, and Cunning, they are Selfish and Perfidious to the last degree; and having no fence of Honour, or Religion to controle them, No contracts or promises on their Parts will Bind them. It is only Force and Fear that restrains them from Robbing and Destroying any they have to do with.

All European Nations concerned in this Trade, have *Forts and Castles* for their Defence, are United into *Companies*, and support their Interest by a Joynt Stock as well as our *British Nation*.

Forts and Castles are a Security, and a Defence against the Insults and Incroachments of other Nations Rivals with us in this Trade, as well as against the Treachery of the Natives. For there are no Courts of Judicature, to Determine Right and Wrong in these Parts of *Africa*. *Martial Law* Ends all Controversies, and the longest Sword carrys it.

A Memorable Instance of which lately happened, between a *British* and a *Dutch* Cheif in the out Factories, the latter having Unjustly detained some *Negro Servants* from the former in their *Dutch Town*, and Refusing to make Satisfaction, they Commonaded each other for Sum time, untill the Directors General

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General of both Nations Enquiring into the matter, caused Restitution to be made to the *British Chief* and so Reconciled them.

The *African Company* say (and that truly) were this Trade left Naked, and Defenceless to Seperate Traders, the *French, Dutch*, and other Nations, would soon make themselves Masters both of it, and them, And were the *Dutch* but once Solely Possess of it, they would make this *African Trade* more Valuable to them, than their *Spice Trade* from *India*, which renders Yearly an Immense unknown Treasure to the United Provinces.

On the other hand, Seperate Traders deny that *Forts and Castles*, are of any use at all in *Guinea*. They deny that there is any Danger from the Treachery of the Natives, or from the Insults of Rivals in this Trade; they Challenge a Natural Right to all Trade, as they are Free Born Subjects of *Great Britain*, and say, the Export of particular Traders, much Exceeds that of the *Company's* and that there can be no Danger of Ruine to the *Plantations*, but from an *United Company* in a Joynt Stock, exclusive of all others, where there will be but one Buyer, and one Seller.

By Faire Pretences and Amusements, with much Clamour, but little Truth, seperate Traders endeavour to Prejudice the *Parliament* of *Great Britain*, not only against the present *Royall African Company*, but against all *Companies* whatsoever.

That *Forts and Castles* are Absolutely necessary to Preserve and carry on the *African Trade*; hath already been the Determined Resolution of the *Commons* of *Great Britain*, in several Sessions of *Parliament*. But how these *Forts and Castles* shall be Supported and Maintain'd, was never yet Resolved on; which may be one reason why no farther Progress

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gress was made in the Settlement of that Trade.

It cannot be done, by the Loose Uncertain: Precarious Management of Particular Traders, whose Interests are as Differing, as their Humours are Various; whatsoever Duty be Impos'd on the *African* Trade for that purpose, unless particular Traders could be Obliged to Continue in the Trade and to Trade Yearly for such a Value, that the Duties arising thereby, might raise a Fund Sufficient for that end, which is not probable if Possible should be done by any, But by an United Company in a Joynt Stock. For the open Scrambling Management of Seperate Traders, will so depretiate the Native Commodities of *Great Britain* in *Africa*, and so Advance the Produce of *Africa*, especially the Price of Slaves, that seperate Traders themselves will grow weary of the Trade, and Decline it. For who would Continue in a loosing Trade? how then must the Plantations be Supplied, and how must these Fortes and Castles be Maintain'd.

Vesting them in the *Crown* will not do it, that will but Entail a Charge on the Publick Revenue, and make our *British* Settlements in *Africa* useless; by giving away the Trade that should Maintain them.

That were to make the Imperial Crown of *Great Britain*, Tributary to the Petty Princes of *Africa*, of whome the Fortes, Castles and Settlements are held; which the Commons of *Great Britain* will never advise, as not being for the Honour of our *British* Nation.

The Intent of Settlements in *Guinea*, is to secure a Trade there, which can never be done without good Order and Government.

The Business of a Governour, should be to direct all Trade, to make Alliances, so as to procure Trade with the Natives; and he must be furnished with Magazines of Goods and Merchandise of all

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ports, proper and sufficient for that end. For unless the chief Governour, be chief Trader; he will have no respect from the Natives of that Country. But who will trust their Goods and Effects with a Governour put in by the Crown, over whom they can have no Authority, and for whom they will have no Security.

What Benefit was that important Fortress of *Tangier* (though vested in the Crown) to the Trades of *Barbary*, *Africa* and the *Straits*, which it pretended to protect? It served only at last, for an Occasion to demand Money of the Parliament for its support, which not being granted, it was soon demolished and relinquished, as not worth the Charge the Nation must have been at in maintaining it; and the reason of this is obvious. It was not vested in Persons interested in those Trades, and so it was made useless.

Bombay in the *East Indies*, had run the same Fate, had not King *Charles* the Second given it to the *East-India* Company, whose Interest it was to support it. That is now made a Fort so impregnable, that on occasion, when the Government of that Country would have put Hardships upon the *East-India* Company, which they thought not reasonable to bear, it withstood an Army of more than 40000 Men, until that Company had applied themselves to the *Great Mogul*, and were redressed.

To appoint a Governour in *Guinea*, and not to furnish him with a Credit sufficient to carry on the *Guinea* Trade, is giving up our *British* Interest in that Trade. How shall such a Governour invite the wild Natives from their inland, and more remote parts of the Country, to come to Trade with our *British* Nation, and protect them in it, (as is the manner of trading in that Country) when he hath neither Merchandise

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chandise to Trade withal, nor any Authority over them that have? To what purpose would be such a Governour? if looking after the Forts and Castles were all was to be required of him; that is more properly the Business of a Porter, than a Governour. But how then will the Plantations be supply'd? How will the Trade be carry'd on? And who must have the Direction of this Trade, if not the Governour.

Masters of Ships cannot do it, were they never so well versed in this Trade; their stay will be too short, they must pursue their Voyages, and a quick Dispatch is the Life of their Business.

Particular Factories would be too easie a Prey to the wild Natives on one hand; and to other Nations Rivals with us in this Trade on the other, to attempt it.

Such lame Constitutions, would never be able to cope with the united Councils, and regular Management of our Competitors in this Trade, incorporated into Companies, and supported by the Laws and respective Governments of the Countries to which they belong.

The last 13 Years Experience of an open Trade, may have sufficiently convinced us of the mischievous Consequences of such Trading, for already the Native Commodities of *Great Britain* are sunk, more than half in their value in *Guinea*; and the price of Slaves are advanced more than treble of what they were before the Trade was laid open; and if a speedy and effectual stop, be not put to this scrambling Management, the Trade it self will be lost to our British Nation.

This Trade, if lost, how shall it be retrieved? It is a Trade of that inestimable value, and of so very great consequence, that whosoever is possessed of it, will

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will do by our British Nation, as the *Dutch* did by the *Portugeze*, who first settled Trade in these Parts of *Africa*, they will stand a War with you, rather than give it up.

We are now on an equal Foot at least, in respect to our British Settlements in *Guinea*, with any other Nation whatsoever Rivals with us in this Trade. And if this honourable House please, you may settle the Trade on such a Basis, that the united Councils of all our Rivals, shall never be able to supplant us in it, and that is in an united Company, with a sufficient Joint Stock and exclusive Privileges.

We may, and shall be safe in the Management of this Trade in a Joint Stock; we are not, and I will be bold to say we cannot be safe, in the loose uncertain Management of Particular Traders.

The Parliament of *Great Britain*, will never put a Trade of utmost consequence to this Nation to hazard, when they may make it secure, and put it past all peradventure.

For 26 Years before this Trade was laid open, that is to say, from 1672 to 1698, this Trade which was in a manner lost to this Nation was retrieved, Settlements purchased, Forts, Factories and Castles built, the Trade secured and increased, and our British Colonies so well provided, that the Planters were enabled to improve their Plantations, to the Honour and Advantage of our British Nation, as it is at this Day. This was all done by an united Company in a joint Stock, with exclusive Privileges.

By the same Method that a Trade was recover'd, by the same it must be preserv'd, improv'd and maintain'd. It is a Folly to say we are in no danger from the Treachery of the Natives, or from the Insults and Entrenchments of Rivals in this Trade; woful Experience hath told us of whole Ships Companies, that

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that have been cut off by the one; and the Loss of our British Interest in *Batum*, *Ceyllone*, and *Amboyna*, are fresh and living Instances of the other.

It was but in *September* last, that there was an Insurrection of the Natives of *Guinea*, to the number of 3000 Persons and upwards, to destroy the *African* Company Settlements at *Dickscove*, and did actually burn the English Town there, of which, notice being given to the Company's chief Agents at *Cape Coast Castle*, they raised a Force, such as the short space of time would admit, marched against these Incendiaries, fought them and routed them, and so saved their Settlements. What could separate Traders have done in this case, they must have submitted to the Cruelty of these Infidels, lost both their Trade, Estates and Settlements; and if they had escaped with their Lives, they would have come home and confirm'd to you, what we are now telling you; that the Trade to *Africa*, can never be carried on to the best Advantage of our British Nation, but in an united Company in a joint Stock, with British Settlements; and that the separate Traders at this Day, could have no Trade at all on the Gold Coast, were it not for the *African* Companies Settlements on that Coast.

An united Company in a joint Stock, with exclusive Privileges, would be a Creature of your own making; you may oblige them to what you please, even in their Constitution. You may proportion the Number of Slaves for our British Plantations, and oblige them to furnish each Colony yearly with a certain number, and if you please, set a Price on them too, that the Planters may not be imposed on. You may oblige them to ship out more of the Native Commodities of *Great Britain* yearly, than either separate Traders or Company together have done *communibus*

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munibus annis, ever since the Trade hath been laid open. But separate Traders can be obliged to nothing, they can give no Security, that they will answer the ends of the Government, that they will sufficiently supply the Plantations, or that they will preserve and carry on the Trade. They may as well challenge it to be their natural Right to leave off Trade when they please, as to continue in it, if they think fit.

The *African* Trade, and the Welfare of the Plantations, is too great a Stake to be hazarded, on the uncertain Management of particular Persons.

Were I to be an Advocate for the Natives of *Africa*, I would desire this Trade might be laid open, as the only means to enrich them: If for the *French*, *Dutch*, or any other Nation, I would desire this Trade might be under any Management, rather than that of an united Company in a joint Stock with exclusive Privileges, for that would work out all other Interests whatsoever. But as I am a Bold *Britain*, and dare speak Truths, I do affirm, and will maintain it, that the Trade to *Africa*, can never be carried on to the best Advantage of our British Nation, but in an united Company with a sufficient joint Stock exclusive of all others. This will enable them to make Improvements, to search into the the hidden Treasures of *Africa*, and to enlarge the Trade. Nothing but a Company thus constituted, could work the Gold Mines, were they now possess'd of them; and that there are such Mines within the Company's Liberty, is as certain, as that there are Lead Mines in *Wales*, or Tin Mines in *Cornwall*. But to work these Mines, without a Parliamentary Establishment to secure the Property, would be like one of the Kings of *Israel* shewing his Treasure to the King of *Assyria*, who came with

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with his Army, a more mighty Prince than himself, and took it all away from him.

As the Company now stands, in relation to the late Act of Parliament for laying open the Trade to *Africa*, they are like Tenants at the Will of the Lord knows who. A Tenant at Will to any Estate, will never plant and improve that Estate; he will rather, to make the best of it for the present, carry off the Produce and impoverish it. It is he that hath a Term in it, that hath it for Life, or hath the Inheritance of it, that plants and improves for Posterity.

The Field that lies common for all People, is always begger'd and neglected, it is Property that incites Industry, and Perpetuity that gives Encouragement for Improvements for future Generations.

It is no new thing, for rambling Traders to make up a broken Voyage by robbing, stealing, and spiriting away the People with whom they pretend to Trade, and Reprisals hath been made upon the British Subjects both in *India* and *Africa* too for such Pyracies. And in an open Trade with these barbarous Nations, there can be no Security, but such things may happen again; but that is no good Method to cultivate and improve Trade with these Nations. Now, the Stock and Effects of a Company, their Forts, Castles and Settlements, as they are a Security to the Company against the Treachery of the Natives, and Inults of other Nations Rivals in this Trade, so are they a Security to the Natives for the Companies good Behaviour towards them, and also to the Government of *Great Britain*, that the Plantations shall be sufficiently supplied, and the Trade carried on and preserved.

A Company is a settled Body, always to be found, it may be sick, and out of Order, but will never die unless

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unless dissolved by the Government. But separate Traders, as they are loose in their Management, they are uncertain in their Settlement, they are subject to a thousand Casualties, give over Trade, and die daily.

The Parliament of *Great Britain*, will never hazard the *African* Trade, on which depends the Welfare of the Plantations, on the uncertain Management of particular Persons.

Whether they will continue the present Royal *African* Company, in the Privileges granted them in their Charter by King *Charles* the Second, is the next thing to be enquired into. True it is their Circumstances are low, their Losses have been many, and their Debts great, but their Condition not past retrieve. One Smile of this honourable House would enable them to surmount all these Difficulties.

To reassume a Royal Grant, made for a valuable Consideration, is without Precedent. This Charter, though a Royal Grant, is also a Contract of King *Charles* the Second, with a certain Number of his Subjects, to retrieve the lost Trade to *Africa*, if they could at their own Cost, and if they did, they were to have it for their Pains, exclusive of all other his Majestties Subjects for a certain Term of Years yet to come, and unexpired. They have done it, and at their own very great Expence, to the Honour of the Nation, and the unspeakable Advantage of the Revenues of the Crown: And shall they now be divested of these their dear bought Privileges? the Honour of the Government, the Justice of the Nation is concerned to do this Royal *African* Company Right. The laying open their Trade for thirteen Years past, hath been a very great prejudice to the Company, no Advantage to the Publick, and but very little to the Persons first concerned in it, most of them having long

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long since declined the Trade. And the Planters complain, the Colonies have not been so well and regularly supplied since, as before the Trade was laid open.

The Forts, Castles, and British Settlement in *Guinea* The Gold Coast for 60 or 70 Leagues together, is all the Property and Estate of the present Royal *African* Company, either purchased with their Money, or built at their Charge, the first Cost is computed to be at least four hundred thousand Pounds.

To oblige the *Company* to part with their Property at an Under value, would be a hardship on the *Company* and wrong their Creditors. The *Parliament* of Great Britain, the Wisdom of the Nation, the Protectors of our Liberties and Properties, will never Act Contrary to the Dictates of Eternal Justice, if they take the *Companies* Settlements, they will pay for them, the full Value in ready Money, not what the Purchasers would Appraise them at, but what they are really worth with the Trade Annexed, or at least what it cost the *Company*, for as much as it is well known, if they were at Liberty to sell to the best Bidder, they might have what they would for their British Settlements in *Guinea*.

King Charles II. in his Royal Grant to this *African* Company of the sole Trade to *Africa*, for a Certain Term of Years, yet to come and Unexpired, for a Valuable Consideration; gave them Encouragement to Purchase Settlements, to Build Forts and Castles for their Security, and the Security of the Trade, and this being a Prerogative in the Crown not then Questioned, the *Company* doth not Doubt, but if the *Parliament* thinks fitt to Divest them of these their Privileges, but they will give them a Sufficient Compensation for the same.

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But if it appear to this Honourable House, that the *African Trade* cannot be preserved to our British Nation, without Forts, Castles and British Settlements in *Guinea*; and that the Forts and Castles cannot be supported and Maintain'd but by a Joynt Stock. The *African* Company humbly hope that they being Already Posses'd of all the British Settlements in *Guinea*, the *Parliament* will Establish them in the Privileges granted them in their Charter by King Charles II. They being willing to submit to such Regulations and Restrictions under such Paines and Penalties, and upon such Terms, as to the Wisdom of this Honourable House shall seem meet.

But however it may fare with the present Royall *African* Company, the *African Trade* is a National concern, without which our *British Colonies* cannot Subsist, the Preservation of this Trade intirely depends on our British Settlements in *Guinea*, which can never be Supported and Maintain'd but by a Joynt Stock. We therefore Humbly Pray that the *Parliament* of Great Britain, would Establish an *African* Company, with a sufficient Joynt Stock, and such powers and privileges, as that this Trade so Valuable in it self, and so Absolutely Necessary to the very being of the Plantations, may not be lost to our British Nation, for if now lost, it will be lost for ever. The Benefit of this Trade is now to well known to be parted with by any that are in possession of it.

Whilst the *African* Company are in Possession of their Settlements in *Guinea*, an Act of *Parliament* in their Favour, would Establish the Trade to our *British* Nation, but if the Settlements are abandoned and the Trade layed open, it will not be in the Power even of the *Parliament* to retrieve it, unless They will Wade through the Treasure of the Nation, and a
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Sea of Blood to come at it, or that it should happen to be an Article in the General Peace now on Foot, which will have all the Powers of *Europe* for its Guarantees.

But be that as it will, an open Trade to *Guinea* will be always a *Felo de se*, it is inconsistent with the Nature of this Trade, and must ever be so whilst the Natives of *Guinea* continue to be as they now are, a Brabarous and Unciviliz'd People. Whilst therefore the *African Company* continue in the Possession of their Settlements in *Guinea*, if the *Parliament* please to Establish them in the Priviledges granted them by King *Charles II.* It would enable them to Pay their Debts without farther assistance from the Government, They would beat the *French* out of the *Guinea* Trade without Fighting. It would give them such an Ascendant over the *Dutch*, (their chief Rivals in the *Guinea* Trade) that in Process of time, *Guinea* may become to *Great Britain* what *Pern* and *Mexico* are to *Spain*, or *Brazel* to *Portugal*, to which let this Honourable House say, *Amen*.

F I N I S.