

1-27-1831

## Letter from John J. Astor to Honorable Mr. Benton in relation to blankets for the Indian trade.

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### Recommended Citation

S. Doc. No. 43, 21st Cong., 2nd Sess. (1831)

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LETTER.

FROM

JOHN J. ASTOR TO HONORABLE MR. BENTON,

*In relation to Blankets for the Indian trade.*

JANUARY 31, 1831.

Laid on the table by Mr. Benton; and ordered to be printed.

NEW YORK, 27th January, 1831.

DEAR SIR: I have received the letter which you were pleased to write me, under date the 20th inst. covering a copy of a bill now before the Hon. the Senate, to reduce the duty on certain articles of Indian goods. You request information as to some of them, viz; the sterling cost, weight, &c. &c. The cost varies annually. I give you at foot the price we expect to pay this year, and which is something more than last year, but not so high as the average price for several years back. I give you, also, the exact weight of what we import; the whole quantity imported, I am sorry to say, I am not able to give you. With respect to the prospect of these being manufactured in this country, I can only state that the American Fur Company have made application to the principal manufacturers in this country to obtain them, without success, there being a want of the kind of wool of which they are manufactured. Blankets of superior quality, and, perhaps, equally cheap in proportion to the quality, can be manufactured in this country, but the price of them is such as the Indians cannot afford to pay. There is one manufactory in this State, the proprietors of which have agreed to make an experiment, and to furnish the American Fur Company a small quantity at an advanced price over what the article can be imported for; and the company, to give encouragement to our own manufactories, have agreed to take what they were willing to engage to deliver; but the quantity is but small.

As to strouds, they cannot be made here: the raw material is of very inferior quality, and is not to be had in the United States, the duty thereon being too high. Scarlet cloth is a very necessary article for the Indian trade, though the quantity wanted for that purpose is not much. Under the present rate of duty the Indians cannot afford to buy it, and it exposes the American trader very much near the line of the British traders, who can afford, by this means, to undersell us.

With respect to facilities for smuggling on our northern line on the St. Lawrence, west, they are undoubtedly very great. Mr. Crooks, who will have the honor to deliver you this, can give you all information on Indian trade.

I presume, from the shortness of the present session, nothing will be done in the matter in question, but I trust next year you will carry the bill into operation.

I have the honor to be,  
Most respectfully, Sir,  
Your humble servant,  
JOHN JACOB ASTOR.

The Hon. Col. BENTON,  
*U. S. Senate, Washington.*

P. S. I find Mr. Crooks is not going; I have added the weight (of the blankets) on the paper enclosed.

BLANKETS, each.

Probable cost in 1831.	Points.	LENGTH.		WIDTH.		Weight, single.	Weight, per pair.
		Feet.	Inches.	Feet.	Inches.		
18s. 6d. sty. per pair	4	7	6	6	0	6 lbs. or more each	13 pounds.
15 9 do do	3½	6	5	5	6	5½ do do	10 do
13 3 do do	3	6	5	5	0	4½ do do	8½ do
9 10 do do	2½	5	4	4	2	3½ do do	6½ do
6 7 do do	2	4	3	3	6	2½ do do	4½ do
5 4 do do	1½	4	3	3	0	1½ do do	3½ do
4 9 do do	1	3	3	3	0	- do do	2½ do

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