Confidential.

Gentlemen of the Senate and of the House of Representatives.

As the continuance of the Act for establishing trading houses with the Indian tribes will be under the consideration of the legislature at its present session, I think it my duty to communicate the views which have guided me in the execution of that act; in order that you may decide on the policy of continuing it in the present or any other form, or to discontinue it altogether if that shall, on the whole, seem most for the public good.

The Indian tribes residing within the limits of the U.S. have for a considerable time been growing more and more uneasy at the constant diminution of the territory they occupy, although affected by their own voluntary sales; and the policy has long been gaining strength with them of refusing absolutely all further sale on any conditions, inasmuch that at this time, it endangers their friendship, and excites dangerous jealousies and perturbations in their minds to make any overture for the purchase of the smallest portions of their land. A very few tribes only are not yet definitely in these dispositions.

In order peaceably to counteract this policy of theirs, and to provide an extension of territory which the rapid increase of our numbers will call for, two measures are deemed expedient. First, to encourage them to abandon hunting, to apply to the raising stock, to agriculture and domestic manufacture, and thereby prove to themselves that left land and labour will maintain them in this better than in their former mode of living. The extensive forests necessary in the hunting life will then become useless, and they will see advantage in exchanging them for the means of improving their farms, and increasing their domestic comforts. Secondly, to multiply trading houses among them, and place within their reach those things which will contribute more to their domestic comfort than the possession of extensive, but uncultivated wilds. Experience and reflection will disclose to them the wisdom of exchanging what they can spare for what we want, for what we can spare and they want, in leading them thus to agriculture, to
our nation seems to owe to the same object, as well as to its own interests, to ex-
-plore this, the only line of easy communication across the continent, and so directly
traversing our own part of it. The interests of commerce place the principal object
within the constitutional powers and care of Congress, and that it should incident-
ally advance the material prosperity cannot but be an additional gratification.

The nation claiming the territory, regarding this as a literary pursuit, which it is
in the habit of permitting within its dominions, would not be disposed to view it
with jealousy, even if the expiring state of its interests here did not render it a
matter of indifference. The appropriation of $2,500 for the purpose of extending the
external commerce of the U.S., while understood and considered by the Executive as
yielding the legislative sanction, would cover the un-
derstanding from notice, and prevent the destruction which interested individuals
might otherwise previously prepare in its way.

Thomas Jefferson
Jan. 18, 1803.