

George Washington's Demands

George Washington to a Continental Congress Camp Committee, Valley Forge, 29 Jan. 1778.

To make soldiers look well and bestow proper attention and care, upon their cloaths, they ought to receive them at stated periods. This gives a taste for decency and uniformity and makes the officers regardful of the appearance of the men; a matter of no small moment in an army, as tending to promote health, and foster a becoming pride of dress; which raises soldiers in their own esteem and makes them respectable to their enemy.

The periods, I would fix upon for delivery, are on the first days of June and January. In June should be given a waistcoat with sleeves, flannel, if to be had, two pair of linnen overalls, one shirt, a black stock of hair, or leather, a small round hat bound and a pair of shoes. In January, a waistcoat to be worn over the former, close in the skirts and double breasted, resembling a sailors, to have a collar and cuff of a different color, in order to distinguish the regiment, a pair of breeches, woolen overalls, yarn stockings, shirt, woolen cap, and a blanket, when really necessary. Watch coats ought, if possible, to be provided for sentinels. Whatever might be furnished more than these, the soldier ought to have stopped out of his pay, upon the terms fixed by Congress, in their late resolve: A list of the cloathing to be kept by the commanding officer of each company, an inspection into them made at least once a week, and punishment inflicted, or restitution made, for every article missing, unless well accounted for. If it could be done which is much to be doubted, it would be well to discriminate the troops of each state, by the color of their cloaths and each regiment by that of the collar and cuff.

If this plan could be adopted, and a quantity of supernumery articles laid in, for occasional demands, our men would appear infinitely better, be much healthier, and the army a great deal stronger, than it commonly is.

The Clothier-General ought to be authorised and directed to enter into contracts, for as large quantities as possible of shoes and stockings to be manufactured in the Country. These are articles, that can least be dispensed with, and the deficiency of which we have most severely felt. A Mr Henry of Lancaster, I am told, would contract for one, or two hundred thousand pair of shoes, annually, to be paid for in raw hides. The number of cattle killed for the consumption of the army enable us to make this contract to great advantage.