



Smithsonian Institution

Freedmen's Bureau

Mississippi Field Offices, Subordinate Field Offices: Columbus, Letters Sent, Vol. 2 (110), July 1867–Dec. 1868

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of moral coercion by the Government; its officers and agents having made them believe that unless they work for a livelihood, the Government will withdraw from them its aid and protection. Remove the Government Officials from among them and it is my impression they would soon settle back into their old ways of thinking and acting.

In reference to the marriage relation, I notice but little improvement for the better. Living together in a state of concubinage they seem to regard as a social right that no one has permission to interfere with. Many cases of distress growing out of this state of things have come to my knowledge & the parties in every instance referred to the proper authorities who for some cause of forbearance, generally on account of the ignorance of the freedmen in the matter, have let them go unpunished. I have time and again urged upon the authorities here the importance of making an example of some one of the many offenders.

In regard to contracts between the Planters and Freedmen I regret to state that there is much trouble, and seems to grow worse daily, from the fact that the crops are now well cared for & there is little or no work at present to do, so the Planters seek some personal difficulty with the Freedmen so that they may have a shadow of excuse for driving them away from their plantations without a settlement.

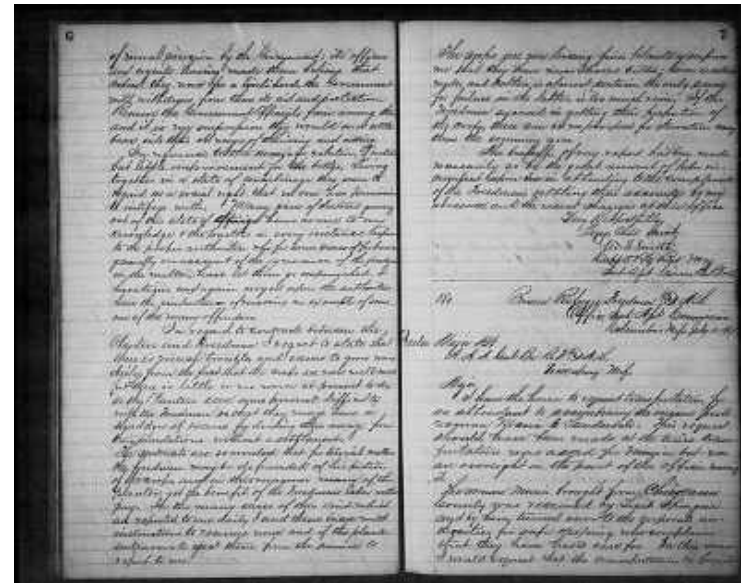
The contracts are so worded that for trivial matters the freedmen may be defrauded of his portion of the crops, and in this manner many of the planters get the benefit of the Freedmen's labor without pay. In the many cases of this kind which are reported to me daily I send them back with instructions to resume work and if the planter endeavors to eject them from the premises to report to me.

The crops are now looking fine, planters inform me that they have never looked better; Corn is entirely made, and cotton is almost certain, the only cause for failure in the latter, is too much rain. If the Freedmen succeed in getting their proportion of the crops, there can be no prospect for starvation among them the coming year.

The briefness of my report has been made necessarily so by the great amount of labor incumbent upon me in attending to the complaints of the Freedmen, settling their accounts, by my absence, and the recent changes at this office.

Very Respectfully
Your Obedt Servt
Geo. S. Smith
Capt V.R.C. Bvt Maj
Sub Asst Comr Bu R.F. & A.L.

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Bureau Refugee Freedmen And A.L.
Office Sub Asst Commissioner
Columbus Miss July 11. 1867.



Preston Major A.W.
A.A.A. Genl Bu R.F. And A.L.
Vicksburg Miss

Major

I have the honor to request transportation for an attendant to accompany the insane freed woman Maria to Lauderdale. This request should have been made at the time transportation was asked for Maria, but was an oversight on the part of the officer making it.

The woman Maria brought from Chickasaw County was received by Lieut Sprague and by him turned over to the corporate authorities for safe keeping, who complains that they have her to care for. For this reason I would request that the transportation be furnished

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