

Washington, D.C.

Jany. 4th, 1868

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My dear Sir.

Your request that I should write you prior to your public meeting in Chicago, is just received. The subject that bears upon us now more than any other is that of suffering from want of food. The reports from Mississippi, South Carolina and Louisiana are more gloomy and furnish more cause for appropriation, than any that we have received from other States.

If we leave out the reasons which arise from prejudice and a covetous spirit the cause of this want may be attributed to the following causes: First, the sudden fall in the price of cotton; second, the failure or neglect to cultivate cereals in such quantity as past experience has shown necessary; third, the shortness of the last crop, and in some sections its total failure, caused principally by the overflow of the ^{ssi}Missi^{ssi}ppi, and also by the caterpillar and army worm.

In South Carolina the rice crop was injured by continous rains. The dykes and dams had also been much damaged during the war. On the Sea Islands, it is reported that the Caterpillar destroyed in many localities three fourths the anticipated crop of cotton.

Notwithstanding the numerous, and in some cases alarming reports that come in from officers and citizens, bearing upon the subject of destitution, I am of the opinion that the Bureau can, and will be able to meet the emergency, without any very large expenditure of the public money.

Now in order to settle matters upon a permanent basis, that all the people may have sufficient intelligence, and independence to become self supporting, and to develop the resources of the Country, no work is more necessary than that in which you are engaged.

Today the cry of want comes from those who have been holders of capital rather than from the laborers. Twenty men who own land, but are without ready money money, complain bitterly of want where one laborer accustomed to earn his daily bread by toil, utters not a murmur. Let the industrious laborers understand their privileges, and become able to combine intelligence with their industry, and they will do as well in the Southern states as anywhere else. If it be not altogether impracticable to reach immediate results, we must remember that it takes but a short time for boys and girls to become men and women. Now intelligence and industry are what we want. Hard work without schools may keep body and soul together, and may add to animal comforts, but it is far better to suffer for bread, than to starve the soul. I urge upon your Association the necessity of making extraordinary efforts to keep up and

extend if possible its educational work. Universal manhood suffrage may be regarded as sort of dead horse in a team of fire. The common schools follow the lead, and material wealth the schools. When we can once get a good thorough system of common schools, in practical operation, self supporting, with a perennial supply of good teachers, throughout the slave states, the material prosperity of these states will be secured beyond peradventure.

Now in order to produce this state of things, we must overcome the inertia of that prejudice which quarrels with suffrage, the ignorance which despises schools, and that covetous money making selfishness which would monopolize all the lands and mines of wealth, keeping all things in the hands of a tyrannical few. The school system when once established must be nourished by the masses of the people, and they must and will have as soon as the schools are in practical operation, the power and the means to keep them alive. Large landholders will very soon part with their lands to industrious and intelligent laborers, who have the power, the intelligence, and the will to use them for the support of enlightened institutions, not the least among which is the common school.

It is undoubtedly difficult for gentlemen in the Northern States to determine the measure of their responsibility in this work of education. Yet it is so important that this work which has been so well initiated, should not cease, should not even flag, so important for all the interests of the country, so important in the interests

of humanity, so important in the light of a practical solution of the great problem of liberty for the world, that I urge upon every man of intelligence and means to consider carefully his own duty in the premises, and to give his aid according to the measure of his convictions.

I trust that your meeting may be absolutely successful, and that you may be able so to present the cause of education, as to receive a most hearty and enthusiastic response from our Western people, who showed so well during the war, their devotion to the cause of liberty.

Very truly yours,

(sd) O.O.Howard, Maj. Genl. Comm.