

Abraham Lincoln papers

From Samuel R. Curtis to Richard McAllister¹, July 1, 1863

¹ Richard McAllister was appointed a captain and commissary of subsistence in August 1861.

Keokuk Iowa July 1st 1863

Dear Captain

Yours of the 28th Ultio is duly received and I am glad you privately Advised one of the Commission of the infernal conspiracy that has been for over ten months employed in efforts to ruin me.² First the Employment of men like Baker to hunt up material. Then calling a Court to give consequence to whatever Baker and others had or could find against me. Placing me in a quasi trial without the right to know my accusers my accusations or any thing only such as my Enemies smuggled out to publish exparte against me.

² Curtis was charged with cotton speculation when he was commander of the Department of Missouri. He maintained that these charges were ill-founded and the product of a conspiracy to have him removed and replaced with a pro-slavery commander. See Curtis to Lincoln, November 9, 1862.

I could not go before the public because this would seem like a criminal declaiming of his innocence to a jury before the jury had the evidence. I could not bring up evidence to refute because no charges were made. I asked for a Court of Enquiry into my affairs but that was not granted.— Thus for over ten months I have been pursued by Secret foes who have done all in their power to collect slander and hold it in readiness to blast my reputation not to try me or allow me to throw off the burden.— If I had plead guilty to every lie they propegated I would perhaps have fared better for they had to invent crimes to make me culpable.

But you say the Court has adjourned. They have been in session three months and a half at least.— I am glad to hear that the only lawyer on the Court says there is no Evidence against me. I have seen nothing myself that could properly be called Evidence Except it may be when Genl Hovey³ swore that he heard me say I had bought Whites cotten which had already been explained by myself and Winslow⁴ and may have been by others, that I confiscated the White property as Contraband and

that I turned it over to my Quartermaster and that I could not have seen or known as to who did buy the Cotton.

3 Alvin P. Hovey

4 Frederick S. Winslow was Curtis's chief quartermaster.

Hovey either lied or he was mistaken as to what I did say and the proof is before the Commission. From the first there has been a fuss about the White Cotton about which I know nothing only that I arrested a dabling officer Murdock who interfered with the Negro Sam who I had told to take care of everything.

When I went to Arkansas I had just as much right to buy Cotton as any body. I was urged at Batesville to do so and also at Helena but I did not because I did not wish to be bothered.— When the excitement began to make Cotton trade a general matter of demoralization to my army, I made the effort to restrain the mischeif and drew down upon myself the suspicion that I was interested in the restraint and all who were precluded from the lines became implacable foes. Malice, envy, and ambition have Carried the matter forward.—

But these knaves cannot claims my removal as their victory. The Pro Slavery anti Provost Marshall Anti Collection of forfeited bonds anti guarding the treasury against R road bond Stock jobbl jobbers and Anti war Copperheads ought to have the Entire credit of my removal. The Presidents letters prove this.⁵ Their Publication was against my instructions, but I cannot suppose the President can object or will care for: They could not have been sent solely for my own eye. They vindicate him against the imputation of removing me for offences the proof of which could not then have come before him as the Commission of Enquiry had then no competent proof and had not reported.—

5 When Lincoln removed Curtis as commander of the Department of Missouri in May 1863, he assured the general that it was not because of anything he had done. Instead, the change was made in an attempt to diminish the factional struggle in Missouri between the supporters of Curtis and Governor Hamilton R. Gamble. Since Lincoln could not remove the governor, he removed Curtis. See Lincoln to John M. Schofield, May 27, 1863 and Lincoln to Curtis, June 8, 1863.

True the reason he did give may not be satisfactory to all my friends yet I think most persons will perceive that he acted with good motives on false representations made by men he had reason to credit.— The Public will make these men accountable and Henderson and Broadhead⁶ seem to feel

the blows which are inflicted. They justly deserve it. I do not know Henderson. He must testify solely from hear say and he is placed in a bad position because he makes himself a volunteer witness against me now not for the good of the Service but to excuse himself for his own part taken in the matter.— He hopes to save himself by sinking me.

6 John B. Henderson and James O. Broadhead

As to Broadhead he speaks of duplicity— He is one of the Self constituted Committee that came and told me they were going to keep the Administration posted so as to prevent needless interference at Washington with my administration and asked me for a letter to the President. Supposing they were sincere I wrote endorsing them in the strongest terms. I often wondered that I seldom or never saw any of them to confer with as I supposed I would in regard to measures. Broadhead did once on his return from Washington bring me an order of General Granger published in Kentucky on the Negro question which he Broadhead desired me to introduce into my administration, but which I very respectfully declined.⁷

7 A reference to General Gordon Granger's General Order No. 15, issued on November 4, 1862, which prohibited any citizen or non-combatant from entering the lines of his army. For the text of the order, see *Official Records*, Series I, Volume 52, Part I, 298-99.

He was in a hurry at the time and I could not fully explain my reasons. It seems instead of representing me he took up false statements as evidence of my duplicity and thereupon instead of sustaining or enquiring he urged my removal! What do you think he means by duplicity if he did not dupe me & all others who regarded him as true and honourable.— I see by the shift he has secured the place of Col Dick⁸ having no doubt the affections of Govr Gamble and his jugler at Washington the Atty Genl.

8 James O. Broadhead replaced Franklin A. Dick as the provost marshal general of Missouri in 1863.

I hope the day will come when Missouri will be relieved from such representation—

My wife joins in kind regards to all our friends especially your good wife and children. If you go East make it your special business to inform the President of my innocence in the publication of his letters and assure him it was against my injunctions & wishes.— That I sought only to show copies to friend but they thought it necessary to vindicate the President and myself against falsehood & convict the real actors in their duplicity.—

I remain Captain Very truly Your friend

S. R. Curtis

Maj Genl