

Abraham Lincoln papers

From John B. Henderson to Abraham Lincoln [With Endorsement by Lincoln]¹, July 6, 1863

1 In May, 1863, General John M. Schofield had replaced Samuel R. Curtis as commander of the Department of Missouri. In the following, Senator Henderson expresses general satisfaction with Curtis' replacement.

Louisiana Mo. July 6th 1863

Dear Sir—

Through a friend I learn have just learned that a movement is on foot among some pestiferous politicians to bring about a change of commanders in this Department, in other words to secure the reappointment of Genl Curtis.

We are now in comparative peace in Missouri. The people have confidence in Genl Schofield and feeling assured of the good intentions of the administration toward them no considerable uprising can be brought about.

Nine tenths of the people every-where in the State are disposed to acquiesce in the recent ordinance of the Convention, abolishing slavery prospectively.²

2 The convention that had declared Missouri's loyalty to the Union in March of 1861, had remained in discontinuous session through June of 1863. In its last meeting it passed an ordinance that would abolish slavery in Missouri in 1870, but which prescribed a period of apprenticeship for the ex-slaves under the supervision of their former masters.

The elements opposing it among the people, are the same that opposed it in the convention, — the radical revolutionists, and the original secessionists. The ordinance is not exactly as I would have had it, but it is better than I expected, and secures all that the true friends of the Government ought to ask. The point gained is, that the people, — the masses, will yield to it a willing support, and our internal peace is put beyond peradventure.

If disturbed we run the risk of losing every-thing that looks toward emancipation. We have some foolish radicals now among us that live under certain influences, perfectly ignorant of those prevailing a mile from them. Whilst others are revolutionists *per se* — disturbers of the public peace, wherever they are, and reckless of the consequences to any body but themselves—

The oppressions practiced by officials under the administration of Genl Curtis in the State I have already denounced as those akin to those of Verres³ and Hastings.⁴ They are such as eventually to drive any people to madness and revolution. Investigations into these wrongs are now being made, and the disclosures will startle the Country. Those giving aid and comfort support to this conduct especially, especially those participating in the iniquities themselves will manifest much solicitude to restore the regime that covers their crimes. The union cause will be strengthened if the union men will boldly put the knife to corruption. It, is a guaranty that we intend to restore and not violate the law.

3 Gaius Verres was a notoriously corrupt Roman governor of Sicily during the waning years of the republic.

4 Warren Hastings was a British governor general of Bengal, India in the eighteenth century. The House of Commons impeached Hastings for his conduct as governor general, but he was acquitted by the House of Lords after a lengthy trial.

At present confidence is increasing in the State, the people are buoyed up by a consciousness that their manhood is being respected, that the union is but another name for liberty and justice, and with such feelings we are stronger than ever.

Bush-whacking cannot live. Already it has withered and disloyalty is becoming in moral estimation, the associate of rapine and plunder.

Such are the results of Genl Schofield's appointment— That he may be permitted to remain in the Department with large discretionary power is the wish of one that has stood by the Government in the darkest moments of trial in Missouri, and who has at no time faltered to support you in the right, as I honestly believe you have always endeavored to be.

your friend

& obt sert.

J. B. Henderson

[Endorsed on Envelope by Lincoln:]

Senator Henderson—