

Abraham Lincoln papers

From James S. Rollins to Abraham Lincoln¹, June 12, 1863

¹ Rollins was a Unionist member of Congress (1861-65) from Missouri.

Columbia Missouri

June 12th. 1863.

Sir,

From recent developments I think you are beginning to understand Missouri matters pretty well; if indeed, you are not already "Master of the situation". Our Convention meets very shortly. I most sincerely hope they will pass an "Ordinance of Emancipation", and thus settle the "Nigger" question in our state. Many loyal men however object — and Members of the Convention object and say, "Suppose we do! What security have weeven then, that the loyal Citizens of the State, will be left undisturbed in their property relations? Will the President stand by us, and not allow the Federal Soldiers, Provost Marshalls &c to interfere with our rights? I answer he will. Now Mr President you could give the cause of Emancipation a great lift, if you would just signify as much in a letter to some friend. Just say that any act of Emancipation, passed by the Convention, would be respected by the Federal Government, and the rights of loyal men under it protected, and you could make all Missouri, Claybanks — Copperheads² — proslavery and Anti-Slavery all (except the Agrarians) Lincoln men! these latter will never be your friends, unless you will agree to use your power, in making a division of the property of the State — and giving them at least a full share. It is desirable that the action of the Action Convention should if possible approximate unanimity: — and if you think proper to write me such a line as I have indicated, and in the absence of a better man, to whom to address it, I will promise so to use it, as to advance a good cause.³

² "Claybank" was a term used to describe a political conservative in Missouri. "Copperhead" was a term generally applied to those in the North who opposed the war or supported the Confederacy.

³ For Lincoln's position on gradual emancipation in Missouri, see his June 22 letter to John M. Schofield.

Wishing you every success, and especially in your efforts to overthrow this "infernal rebellion"—



I am, Your friend

James S. Rollins