

Order from Maj
Gen Howard
relating to Freedmen
Bureau
May 19th 1865

WAR DEPARTMENT,
BUREAU OF REFUGEES, FREEDMEN AND ABANDONED LANDS,
Washington, D. C., May 19, 1865.

CIRCULAR,
No. 2.

By appointment of the President, I assume charge of the "Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands."

I. . . Commissioners will be at once appointed for the different insurrectionary States. To them will be entrusted the supervision of abandoned lands, and the control of all subjects relating to refugees and freedmen in their respective districts. All agents in the field, however appointed, are requested to report to them the condition of their work. Refugees and freedmen not already provided for will inform them of their wants. All applications for relief will be referred to them or their agents by post and district commanders.

II. . . But it is not the intention of Government that this Bureau shall supersede the various benevolent organizations in the work of administering relief. This must still be afforded by the benevolence of the people through their voluntary societies, no Governmental appropriations having been made for this purpose. The various Commissioners will look to the associations laboring in their respective districts to provide as heretofore for the wants of these destitute people. I invite therefore the continuance and co-operation of such societies. I trust they will still be generously supported by the people, and I request them to send me their names, lists of their principal officers, and a brief statement of their present work.

III. . . The demands for labor are sufficient to afford employment to nearly if not quite all the able bodied refugees and freedmen. It will be the object of all Commissioners to introduce practicable systems of compensated labor; and to this end, they will endeavor to remove the prejudices of their late masters unwilling to employ their former servants; to correct the false impressions sometimes entertained by the freedmen that they can live without labor, and to overcome that false pride which renders some of the refugees more willing to be supported in idleness than to support themselves. While a generous provision should be made for the aged, infirm and sick, the able bodied should be encouraged and if necessary compelled to labor for their own support.

IV. . . The educational and moral condition of these people will not be forgotten. The utmost facility will be afforded to benevolent and religious organizations and State authorities, in the maintenance of good schools (for Refugees and Freedmen,) until a system of free schools can be supported by the re-organized local Governments. Meanwhile whenever schools are broken up by any authorized agent of the Government, it is requested that the fact and attendant circumstances be reported to this Bureau.

Let me repeat, that in all this work it is not my purpose to supersede the benevolent agencies already engaged in it, but to systematize and facilitate them.

O. O. HOWARD,
Major Gen'l, Commissioner Bureau of Refugees,
Freedmen and Abandoned Lands.

OFFICIAL:
Captain and Ass't Adj't Gen'l.

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Handwritten notes in cursive script, including the name "Howard" and other illegible text.