
AFRICANS IN FORT MONROE MILITARY DISTRICT.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

IN ANSWER TO

Resolution of the House, transmitting a report of Major General Wool, on the number, age, and condition of the Africans in his district.

MARCH 25, 1862.—Laid on the table, and ordered to be printed.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington City, D. C., March 25, 1862.

SIR: I have the honor to communicate the accompanying letter and report for Major General John E. Wool, in answer to the resolution of the House of Representatives.

Your obedient servant,

EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

Hon. GALUSHA A. GROW,
Speaker of the House of Representatives.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA,
Fort Monroe, Virginia, March 22, 1862.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith, in conformity to a call by a resolution of the House of Representatives, a report of the number, age, and condition of the Africans in this department.

The information which it contains is, I believe, in all respects strictly correct, and has been obtained by three commissioners: Colonel T. J. Cram, Colonel Le Grand B. Cannon, and Major William P. Jones, aides-de-camp on my staff, after a very rigid examination and investigation under department General Orders No. 5, dated January 30, 1862, herewith appended.

All which is respectfully submitted.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN E. WOOL,
Major General.

Hon. EDWIN M. STANTON,
Secretary of War.

SPECIAL ORDERS, } HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA,
 No. 72. } *Fort Monroe, Virginia, October 14, 1861.*

All colored persons called "contrabands," employed as servants by officers or others residing within Fort Monroe, or outside of the fort, Camp Hamilton and Camp Butler, will be furnished with their subsistence, and at least eight dollars per month for males, and four dollars per month for females, by the officers or others employing them.

So much of the above-named sums as may be necessary to furnish clothing, to be decided by the commanding officers of Fort Monroe, Camp Hamilton, and Camp Butler, will be applied for that purpose, and the remainder will be paid into the hands of the chief quartermaster, to create a fund for the support of those "contrabands" who are unable to work for their own support.

All able-bodied colored persons who are under the protection of the troops of this department, and who are not employed as servants, will be immediately put to work, in either the engineer's or quartermaster's departments.

By command of Major General Wool.

WM. D. WHIPPLE,
Assistant Adjutant General.

GENERAL ORDERS, } HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA,
 No. 34. } *Fort Monroe, November 1, 1861.*

The following pay and allowances will constitute the valuation of the labor of "contrabands" at work in the engineer, ordnance, quartermaster, commissary, and medical departments at this post, to be paid as hereinafter mentioned:

Class 1. Negro men over 18 years of age, and able-bodied, ten dollars per month, one ration, and the necessary amount of clothing.

Class 2. Negro boys, from 12 to 18 years of age, and sickly and infirm negro men, five dollars per month, one ration, and the necessary amount of clothing.

The quartermaster will furnish all the clothing. The departments employing these men will furnish the subsistence specified above, and as an incentive to good behavior, (to be withheld at the discretion of the chiefs of the departments, respectively,) each individual of the first class will receive two (2) dollars per month, and each individual of the second class, one (1) dollar per month, for their own use.

The remainder of the money valuation of their labor will be turned over to the quartermaster, who will deduct from it the cost of the clothing issued to them; the balance will constitute a fund to be expended by the quartermaster, under the direction of the commanding officer of the department, for the support of the women and children, and those that are unable to work.

For any unusual amount of labor performed, they may receive extra pay, ranging in amount from fifty (50) cents to one (1) dollar; this to be paid, by the departments employing them, to the men themselves, and to be for their own use.

Should any man be prevented from working on account of sickness for six consecutive days, or ten days in any one month, one-half the money valuation will be paid. For being prevented from laboring for a longer period than ten days, all pay and allowances cease.

By command of Major General Wool.

WM. D. WHIPPLE,
Assistant Adjutant General.

GENERAL ORDERS, }
No. 5. }

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA,
Fort Monroe, January 30, 1862.

I. Colonel T. J. Cram, inspector general, and Major Le Grand B. Cannon, aide-de-camp, are hereby appointed and constituted a commission, for the purpose of making a critical examination of the condition of the persons known as vagrants or "contrabands," who are employed in this department, under department General Orders No. 34, of 1861, in reference to their pay, clothing, subsistence, medical attendance, shelter, and treatment, physical and moral.

II. Chiefs of the several departments, their subordinates and employés, will furnish to the commission such reports and information as the commission may require, to enable it to perform the duties imposed, the object being to do justice to the claims of humanity, in a proper discharge of the grave responsibility thrust upon the military authorities of this department, in consequence of numerous persons (men, women, and children) already congregated and daily increasing, being abandoned by their masters, or having fled to this military command for protection and support.

III. The commission will also examine into the condition of such of the foregoing specified class of persons as have been or are employed under department Special Orders No. 72, of 1861, and will further examine whether the several chiefs of departments have a sufficiency or an excess of employés or laborers to enable them to discharge their respective duties, and if a greater or less number than are now employed can be economically employed for these duties.

It having been reported that the said class of persons known as vagrants or contrabands have not been properly treated in all cases by those having them in charge, the commission cannot be too rigid in its examination, in order that justice may be done to them as well as to the public service.

IV. The results of the investigations will be reported by the commission to these headquarters as early as practicable, with such suggestions as the commission may deem proper for the improvement of the treatment and management of these persons; and the commission is authorized to employ such clerical assistance as it may need, to be detailed from this command.

By command of Major General Wool.

WM. D. WHIPPLE,
Assistant Adjutant General.

GENERAL ORDERS, }
No. 6. }

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA,
Fort Monroe, February 4, 1862.

Major William P. Jones, aide-de-camp, is appointed a member of the commission constituted by department General Orders No. 5, of the 30th ultimo.

By command of Major General Wool.

WM. D. WHIPPLE,
Assistant Adjutant General.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA,
Fort Monroe, March 20, 1862.

The commission appointed under General Orders Nos. 5 and 6 have the honor respectfully to report:

As the orders related more especially to persons in this military department known as "vagrants or contrabands," embracing their relations to the military power as an economy and a duty, and also the question as to how far their

condition might be improved in connexion with the military authority, the commission started with the general proposition that the military power has not only the right but it is among its highest duties to avail itself of any and all means within its control to perfect its discipline, render its position secure, or make it effective for an advance against an enemy; and for these ends it has the right to compel service or use from anything, animate or inanimate, which a military necessity may demand. At the same time they consider that necessity is the only proper measure of the extent to which such power should be exercised.

The commission proceeded upon the basis of requiring from the several chiefs of departments of your command, and also from all others who had had official intercourse in any way with these people, reports of the number of "vagrants or contrabands" employed, and such other information as your orders Nos. 5 and 6 contemplated.

Full reports and tabular statements have in most instances been promptly rendered, with a mass of information, and all of which the commission have carefully examined. These reports and statements have been preserved, and can be referred to at any time required.

The General Order No. 5 calls for special information under the following heads, viz: Clothing, subsistence, shelter, medical attendance, treatment, physical and moral, and also the economy to the government in its use of the labor of these people; likewise such suggestions as the commission may deem proper for the improvement and management of these people.

I. CLOTHING.

The commission made a personal examination and inspection of the clothing purchased by the quartermaster for these people under special orders from the War Department, and report that the usual kind of clothing provided at the south on the plantations it was stated could not be obtained ready-made, but that quite a variety has been obtained, generally of a fair quality, and purchased at prices not considered excessive; shoes were sufficient, and at prices reasonably low.

A very considerable quantity of clothing had been sent by charitable persons to be dispensed, which the quartermaster represents he has in all cases issued to women and children, especially to those who gave no equivalent to the government in the way of labor or otherwise. In many cases, however, the commission find that those who have labored have not received a sufficiency of clothing to which they were entitled under General Order No. 34.

With funds derived from the labor of these persons the quartermaster, it appears, has purchased for and issued clothing to them up to 28th February amounting to \$5,526 92, and shoes to the amount of \$834 80.

II. SUBSISTENCE.

General Order No. 34, of 1861, provides, as a part of compensation to the laborers, that each shall receive one soldier's ration per day. These were issued by the commissary department to Sergeant Smith, who had been assigned to the duties of superintendent of the "vagrants or contrabands." From the reports of chiefs of the departments we find the number of full rations issued for those who did and those who did not work for the government, also the number making full time of daily labor, and present them in the following table:

| Month. | No. of rations per day issued for all. | No. of contrabands working for departments. | | | | | Total No. of laborers employed. |
|----------------|--|---|-------------|-----------|-----------|----------|---------------------------------|
| | | Quartermaster. | Commissary. | Engineer. | Ordnance. | Medical. | |
| November | 858 | 352 | 20 | 41 | 18 | 22 | 453 |
| December | 821 | 359 | 20 | 34 | 13 | 22 | 451 |
| January | 478 | 321 | 19 | 17 | 13 | 22 | 392 |
| February | 506 | 311 | 19 | 15 | 16 | 22 | 383 |

Besides these full rations additional issues of bread rations were drawn in the four months to the number of 772. It also appears that, besides the above, rations have been issued to thirty-seven women, laundresses to the colored laborers; also to about sixty children, the latter returning no equivalent to the government.

Again, from the report of the provost marshal at Camp Hamilton, it appears that for the five months ending 1st January last, he had drawn rations amounting to about 383 per day, which were issued to about 650 women and children and old, infirm men, all of whom returned little or no equivalent to the government. But since the first of January, the rations issued there have not exceeded seventy, and for part of the time were less than forty per day. As a consequence, those have been thrown very much on their own exertions to provide for themselves; and the commission, on inquiry, do not find that any amount of suffering has ensued, but that in many instances the effort at self-support has been successful and improving.

At Newport's News it appears that the larger number of this class of blacks are in the service of officers, or supporting themselves by trading, oystering, &c., the government furnishing rations to none not returning an equivalent in labor. Subsistence to those who labor for the government is all that is required under orders Nos. 34 and 72, and it is believed that they are doing well for themselves. Indeed, this portion of your command, not being taxed by the wants of the young and infirm, presents the best aspect of the condition of these people.

The commission made a personal examination of the mess-rooms and kitchens in the quarters outside the fort, and also attended at their meals. The mess-tables are well arranged, the kitchens provided with ranges and all necessary cooking utensils, with a sufficient force of cooks.

On inquiry of these people as to the sufficiency of their food, the commission are satisfied that, in many instances, they have had good cause for complaint. The quality is the usual soldiers' ration, but they have been restricted in quantity, and in some instances refused meals altogether. This violation of their rights is solely to be attributed to the superintendent, Sergeant Smith, but since his removal, this wrong has been corrected, and no complaints on this point have been made.

An examination of these contrabands in regard to the treatment they had received resulted in the arrest and investigation generally of the acts of said Smith. It appeared, by his own admissions and other evidence, that he had withheld a portion of the rations provided under General Order No. 34; sold them to sutlers, and, in one instance, to a citizen, at about one-half their cost price to the government, and misappropriated the funds.

The gross amount he realized from these fraudulent sales, as far as the commission were able to discover, is about \$550, a portion of which was expended

in purchasing tobacco and some utensils necessary for the negro mess, amounting to about \$250. One hundred and fifty dollars was refunded by said Smith in money; the balance has not been accounted for.

The purchases he made of a sutling firm in exchange for the rations he sold were largely overcharged. The whole transaction between Smith and this firm shows that the rations were sold under cost price, in about the same ratio as the articles bought were in excess of the current cash prices, evincing a piece of sharp practice, by which the government and negroes were defrauded, and the sutlers made an unwarrantable profit. The commission would remind the general commanding that this sutler firm was located a little outside the fort, in virtue of special authority emanating from the late honorable Secretary of War, with the privilege of erecting their store on public ground.

The sale of rations to the post sutler by Smith, at about the same low rates as to the firm just mentioned, is justified by the said post sutler, on the ground that he has been, and is continually, buying company's savings at the same rates. There is no evidence that he overcharged on articles sold, as his purchases of Smith were generally paid for in cash. Smith also admits selling a barrel of flour to a woman, and three to a baker in Camp Hamilton, at \$7.25 per barrel. It is proper to state here that Sergeant Smith made these sales in direct violation of the orders of the quartermaster, who had instructed him to turn in all savings to the quartermaster's department, and have their value credited to the contraband fund.

III. SHELTER.

Two large, commodious buildings have been erected by the quartermaster's department for the use of the contrabands, who are employed in the various army departments, as quarters, which are fitted with a double tier of bunks on the first and mess-room floor, and a double tier in the second story. These quarters are thoroughly ventilated, and capable of lodging and messing three hundred males each. The cooking arrangements are all that could be desired, the buildings well policed, in all respects unexceptionable, and fully equal to the best of soldiers' barracks. Another building has also been erected by the same department as quarters for the families of contrabands, capable of accommodating about forty families, provided with kitchens, a common mess-room, and a commodious wash-room. The cost of all these quarters, including a hospital building, (to be noticed under head IV,) has been about \$4,550, as shown by the quartermaster's report, all having been erected at public cost, and not charged to the contraband fund.

At Newport News those who are in the quartermaster's employ are sheltered in log huts and quite as well provided for in this respect as the troops at that post. Several buildings, deserted by their owners, who are known or supposed to be in the rebel army, are occupied by "vagrants or contrabands" in and about Camp Hamilton and Hampton bridge. In most instances too many persons are thus congregated under one roof, which, from the small number of buildings in the vicinity, cannot well be avoided. These buildings have been taken possession of by these people of their own accord in their necessities; but the tenements have been inspected by the military authorities of this department for police and disciplinary purposes.

IV. MEDICAL ATTENDANCE.

From the report of the medical director of the department rendered to the commission, and from other reliable evidence, it is evident that upon this point there has been no cause of complaint; and the commission have pleasure in stating that the post and brigade surgeons, especially the brigade surgeon at

Camp Hamilton, have voluntarily rendered advice and furnished medicines whenever the wants of the people required them. In his report the medical director of the department strongly urged that a surgeon should be appointed to attend especially on the people; and since the commission was raised, a surgeon has been appointed, under special authority from the President, by the general commanding, and especially assigned to, and is now in, the active discharge of this duty. From the report of this medical gentleman, it is apparent to the commission that a high average of health obtains amongst these people. A hospital has been built by the quartermaster's department for them, located (outside the fort) on a convenient and eligible site as regards health and neighboring buildings, and provided with sick wards, kitchen, store-rooms, and a comfortable lying-in room, and is in all respects equally as well appointed as a hospital for soldiers.

V. PAY.

Your Special Order No. 72 does not fix limits to wages to be allowed other than to prescribe the least at which they were permitted to be employed by the departments as well as by officers and civilians connected with the service, thus manifesting an effort to prevent their labor from being appropriated without compensation. By the report and tabular statement of the clerk keeping the accounts of the men employed, and attending to the issuing of clothing in the quartermaster's department, requiring a large amount of labor, which, it is believed, he has faithfully performed, the commission nevertheless regret to be obliged to present that these people have not only not been regularly paid their monthly allowance of two dollars, provided under General Order No. 34, but in most or very many instances they have received but a very small, and in some instances no part of their dues. The commission present this forcibly as a negligence for which they can find no proper excuse; this will also hold good for sums due for extra labor; likewise in many cases where they have been employed as private servants.

From the quartermaster's statement of receipts, expenditures, and dues submitted to the commission, it appears that on the 28th day of February, 1862, there was due, for the labor of all kinds contemplated in your Special Order No. 72, the sums following, viz :

| | |
|---|-------------|
| From those officers and civilians who have not paid for their labor as servants | \$1, 472 54 |
| From hospitals for labor in the hospitals | 504 00 |
| From the quartermaster's department a balance, as per his statement, in hand | 7, 474 78 |
| From those employing them on extra labor | 982 50 |
| | <hr/> |
| Total | 10, 433 82 |
| | <hr/> <hr/> |

Your commission are not informed that any accounts have been kept in any of the departments, or that any payments have been made for the labor of these people prior to the operation of General Order No. 34, though it has come forcibly to the knowledge of the commission that many of them had previously worked months in these departments, receiving only subsistence and shelter for their services. To refuse further compensation would be manifestly unjust, and your commission have no hesitation in recommending that all so employed shall receive compensation tantamount at least to the provisions of General Order No. 34, antedating to the commencement of such service, and coming down to the date of said order.

VI. TREATMENT, PHYSICAL AND MORAL.

The commission approach this subject with more embarrassment than any other. It suggests that the moral condition of a people or a class depends upon their physical treatment, and that their status, or rather, as in the present instance, their want of status, largely influences both their moral and physical conditions. The commission also consider that these persons are not surrounded by an influence which is best calculated to ameliorate their physical treatment or improve their moral condition, as it would be difficult to prove that the contact of an army in the process of perfecting its own discipline creates inducements tending to the improvement of society or elevation of the standard of civilization. These persons are thus being tried under difficulties and circumstances of great disadvantage.

The commission find that since you assumed command of this department, (August 17, 1861,) no order has been issued restricting the free exercise of the rights of these persons to enter within, or depart beyond, the military limits, differing from those imposed on all other non-combatants, and no other prohibition, except they, the blacks, were compelled, by virtue of General Order No. 34, and Special Order No. 72, to work for the several departments, or support themselves, to prevent irretrievable vagrancy, and a continued tax upon public charity. The commission deem it their duty to present this fact prominently, as a false impression exists on this important point.

In regard to the kind and amount of work it is clear to the commission that the several military departments have employed them generally for the performance of such work as would have been required of a body of equal number of white laborers. It has been customary to turn them out at an early hour, in the usual manner as with troops; cause them to make up their beds; police in and around their quarters; get breakfast; and be ready for work at seven in summer and seven and a half o'clock in winter. At these appointed hours the roll is called, and the different parties told off in squads, some for labor on the wharves, others with the blacksmiths, carpenters, and at the various store-houses, precisely in the same manner as white laborers would have been conducted. As to the number of hours per day for labor they have been governed in this respect by the bells of the departments calling to and from work, and labored, (as whites have done,) ten hours in summer and eight in winter. When called out at night, as they frequently have been to labor, they have had extra pay credited to them.

Several instances have been reported of harsh treatment by those having the superintendence of them. The commission gave these cases, in accordance with your instructions, careful and minute investigation, taking evidence principally from whites, and are fully persuaded that most of the worst of these would not have occurred had their superintendence been entrusted to a civilian—a man of education, policy in the management of men, and actuated by a desire to benefit their condition and elevate their self-respect, instead of degrading it to a lower level than it was before. The citations of the cases and the evidence to sustain them have been submitted to the general commanding, who has not failed to notice them promptly in a manner which your commission believe will prevent similar abusive treatment and flagrant violation of natural rights.

In regard to moral treatment, schools have been in successful operation at Camp Hamilton under the charge of a clergyman, assisted by other teachers, black and white, where children and adults are daily instructed in reading, writing, and the elements of arithmetic; also, religious instructions and meetings are regularly held on Sunday and stated evenings during the week. It is gratifying to the commission to be able to express their belief that encouraging progress is making in these important duties, for details of which reference may

be made to the reports of the reverend gentleman and the provost marshal of Camp Hamilton. No regular school is established in or about the fort for the want of a site, the vicinity of the fort being so crowded with buildings that the necessity of demolishing many used as storehouses has been seriously contemplated, as they interfere with the range of the guns. Until the new ground, now being made, shall be finished, and which then could be appropriated for a site, the commission recommend the temporary use, by some proper teacher, of the quarters of the contrabands for childrens' schools, between the hours of eight and eleven, and two and five in the afternoon, and the hours between seven and nine in the evening for adults; and for divine service at proper hours on Sunday.

VII. ECONOMY OF THIS LABOR TO THE GOVERNMENT.

The commission have made diligent inquiries of the several departments employing these "vagrants or contrabands," as to the economy of their labor in comparison with the ordinary labor of whites. In one instance, men selected with care and their fitness for special work, (about one hundred and twenty-five men, the largest number embodied for special work of stevedores in the quartermaster's department,) it is admitted they perform as much as white laborers. In another case—a squad repairing the railroad—it is conceded does about three-fourths as much as an equal number of whites; and your commission are of the opinion that this latter estimate could be safely counted upon as the relative amount of labor of these people, taking them on the average. It must be remembered, however, that these people, from their previous habits of life and present condition, have not the same incentive to industry as whites who have absolute control of the wages of their labor, and are otherwise unrestricted in freedom of action.

A tabular statement of the cost of this labor to the government for the past four months is here submitted, premising that, in the item of subsistence, rations issued to those who did not work are reckoned against those who did work, in addition to the rations allowed to these last; thus divesting the question from all idea of charity from the government.

| Month. | No. of laborers employed per day. | Cost of subsistence of each per day. | Wages per month per man. | Subsistence per mo. per man. | Cost of wages and subsistence to the government per man per month. |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| November | 453 | \$0 34 ³ / ₁₀ | \$10 00 | \$10 29 | \$20 29 |
| December | 451 | 32 ⁸ / ₁₀ | 10 00 | 10 17 | 20 17 |
| January | 392 | 22 | 10 00 | 6 82 | 16 82 |
| February | 383 | 18 | 10 00 | 5 04 | 15 04 |

This estimate is exclusive of cost of clerk hire for keeping accounts, management, shelter, and other incidental expenses. This is certainly a very low price, as the quartermaster's department has heretofore paid per month \$25 and one ration per day for similar labor, making the cost \$30 10 per month, shelter being furnished besides. It will be recollected that the number of rations issued to indigents and young in Camp Hamilton, fell off after January 1, to about fifty per day. This is the cause of the reduction of the cost of the labor per month, for January and February.

In considering this question of economy, it is proper to present that at first resort was had to enlisted men from the volunteer regiments for details of working parties, but it was found impossible to get any valuable amount of such service out of them, which is not to be wondered at. It must also be considered that, with the demands of the army for enlistments, it would have been very difficult and expensive to have obtained from any source a sufficient force of white labor to do the service required, and which has been performed by these contraband blacks. The quartermaster informs the commission that it is with considerable difficulty he can get a sufficiency even of this kind of labor, as these people desire to engage in the service of officers, civilians, or work for themselves. It is fair to conclude, therefore, that superior inducements are offered by private than public service.

VIII. CENSUS.

The commission submit a census of "vagrants or contrabands," though it was not required in your order, yet in considering the questions embraced, it is deemed important. The table of census submitted below is not supposed to be entirely accurate. It is estimated, however, that about one hundred are employed with officers, sutlers, and traders. Lately very few have come within our lines, and these singly and in small parties, and not as heretofore in large squads. A considerable number have taken service in the navy, some have gone off as servants to officers going south in the volunteer service, and quite a number have disappeared, going to parts unknown to the commission. There seems to be little inclination among them to leave here to go north. Service in the navy is decidedly popular with them. The navy rates them as boys; they get \$10 a month, and are entitled to all the privileges of ships' crews, and besides, have absolute control of the earnings of their own labor, which must operate as a powerful incentive to prefer the sea to the land service, when in the latter only \$2 per month is the amount they realize.

| Place. | Adult | | Children | | Total | | Aggregate of males and females. |
|--------------------------------|-------|---------|----------|---------|-------|---------|---------------------------------|
| | Male. | Female. | Male. | Female. | Male. | Female. | |
| Fort Monroe..... | 387 | 117 | 93 | 94 | 480 | 211 | 691 |
| Camp Hamilton..... | 191 | 224 | 161 | 167 | 352 | 391 | 743 |
| Camp Butler, Newport News..... | 74 | | | | 74 | | 74 |
| | 652 | 341 | 254 | 261 | 906 | 602 | 1,508 |

IX. SUGGESTIONS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THEIR CONDITION.

Your commission, after a careful review of the reports and suggestions accompanying them, and a personal examination of the condition of these people, also after an examination of the laws of Congress, together with the question of military necessity, are forced to the conclusion that the practical working of the system inaugurated is highly objectionable, mainly wrong, and now entirely unnecessary.

1st. *Want of power.*—Without discussing the laws of Congress bearing on this subject, the question of State rights, or anything covering the question of title, which are matters entirely to be determined by civil power, though all of which might with propriety be considered, if necessary, even by a military com-

mission; your commission believe there is want of authority in government to hold these people, and compel them to be the recipients of its charity.

2d. *Military necessity*.—We suppose it cannot be urged as a military necessity to retain them, for identically the same voluntary labor can be obtained at as cheap or a less rate. It will hardly be denied that more is not performed by a person who has a voice in the wages of his labor than one who has not; besides, the military necessity could not extend to the women and children and those who are sick and infirm. The position of all would be one of *quasi* slavery, without being compelled to do their full work.

But admitting the military necessity of using those whose labor the military power requires, where is the authority for fixing a price by which others may employ them, using the wages of such labor to support those who do not or cannot support themselves?

The plan of giving the same pay to all alike is discouraging to the skilful, honest, industrious laborer, who fully earns his wages, while it only confirms the lazy and shiftless in their laziness. There is no motive for the industrious to labor with diligence in his regularly-appointed task. No matter how great their industry, or perfect their skill, they can gain no more than the slothful or unskilful; and if they are not absolute drones, they may get as much as if they gave their best exertions to the task. There is no incentive to ambition to prove themselves good workmen. Is it just to make the industrious and single work to accumulate a fund to support the lazy man's family? It is no argument against these people's ability to provide for themselves, that under their discouragements they do not show an activity as great as the white man under the incentive of proportional remuneration; for if white men were placed in the same situation, who can prove the result would not be the same?

It is destructive to the energies of an individual or a people, to assume them of charity whenever they apprehend difficulty. Witness the effect of Irish soup houses, and all "socialistic institutions." Better by far to let one here and there fall by the way-side, than to encourage the hope that the Herculean arm of the nation is to be wielded in clearing their path.

3d. The demands for government labor at this post is limited, but the government would have, as its arms advance, almost no limit to the demands on its charity. The system is, therefore, incapable of expansion, and cannot, from its very expensiveness to government, be carried on with a much larger number. Is it well to establish a precedent for the benefit of an inferior race which has always been refused, and cannot be granted to a superior race; and thus to establish a system that would be quoted against the government by all parties—by its foes for its failures, by its friends for its expense, and by the recipients of its charity because it was not continued, and taught them to rely on a hope which could not be realized?

As a verification of the force of our argument, reference is made to the tabular statement under head VII, from which it will be found that for the months of November and December the number of rations issued to women and children and the infirm brought the cost of subsistence on those who labored to 33½ cents per capita per day; and in the months of January and February, when, it will be recollected, these issues to women and children were very largely suspended, the cost of subsistence on those who labored was 20 cents per capita per day. This decreased cost of labor is owing entirely to a curtailment of this charity, which compelled these people to rely upon their own exertions, and yet no distress has occurred in consequence.

4th. Your commission are assured, by educated and philanthropic gentlemen, that there is no necessity for any governmental charity to these people; that societies at the north will undertake to provide for all their proper wants, in connexion with their moral and intellectual culture. We earnestly recommend

that it be left, as government leaves all similar demands, to the intelligence and generosity of the people.

The commission also recommend, as suggested under head VI, the use of the contrabands' quarters, near the fort, to be granted, under the direction of a person who may be appointed as their superintendent, for daily schools for children; and evening schools for adults, and for divine service on Sundays; providing that the hours selected for these purposes shall not interfere with messing and hours of labor for the men, and always subject to the military authorities. They also recommend, as indicated in VI, that a site be granted for the purpose of erecting a school-house and chapel, providing that all structures erected for them be built and sustained without expense to the government, and to be removed whenever the military authorities require, without claim on the government for such removal; that all blacks or "contrabands" not in the employ of the government, of officers, or others, connected with the military service at the fort, be removed, if they remain in this vicinity, beyond Mill creek; that no more buildings be erected at the government expense except for the shelter of those who are in government service; that the wages of their labor be paid to these people for their own use and enjoyment, prices to be determined by individual skill, industry, and ability, and regulated by supply and demand, or by any other standard system which governs the departments of the army; as part of the compensation, that each laborer receive one ration per day, and quarters in all respects similar to the usages heretofore obtaining with white or black free labor.

5th. The commission would earnestly recommend the appointment by government, or the commanding general, of a person (as already indicated) always subordinate to the military authorities, though unconnected with the military service—a man of elevated moral character, high social position and intelligence, who would consent to serve from motives of philanthropy; such a person would be most fit, and recommend that the military authorities protect him in all proper efforts to improve these people physically, morally, and religiously; to inculcate the virtues indispensable to this end, such as honesty, industry, temperance, economy, patience, and obedience to all rightful authority, leaving out of the question their social and political rights, believing that these questions belong more properly to the government.

6th. Your commission would likewise urgently recommend the appointment, by the proper authority, of a provost judge, who, clothed with civil power and military authority, could protect these ignorant people from abuse to their persons, and enforce the recovery, from all who employ them, of their just dues.

This officer is also indispensably necessary in this military department, in the absence of all civil law, to protect loyal citizens from continual marauding by the soldiers and negroes.

All officers, soldiers, and attachés of the army, who have had the services of these people, should be compelled to pay them the wages of their labor, by virtue of Special Order No. 72.

7th. Your commission are aware that these suggested reforms conflict in a considerable degree with the present system, which was doubtless the plan of a benevolent and patriotic heart, and perhaps the best that could be devised for the time being. It was a new thing to all, beset with difficulties and antagonisms on all sides, but, like all systems, requiring practical results to develop its weak points, and time to remedy its errors.

In conclusion, your commission are conscious of having taken much time in the examination of this most delicate but interesting question, but feel a consciousness that they have founded their opinions entirely upon facts presented.

We, the undersigned commission, have the honor to be, with the highest consideration, your most obedient servants,

T. J. CRAM,
Colonel A. D. C., *Acting Inspector General.*
LE G. B. CANNON,
Colonel U. S. A. and A. D. C.
WM. P. JONES,
Major U. S. A. and A. D. C.

Major General JOHN E. WOOL,
Commanding Department of Virginia.

GENERAL ORDERS, } HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA,
No. 22. } *Fort Monroe, Va., March 18, 1862.*

I. The chiefs of the engineer, ordnance, medical, subsistence, and quartermaster's departments, employing vagrants or persons known as "contrabands," by virtue of General Orders No. 34, also all officers, sutlers, citizens, and others employing them by virtue of Special Orders No. 72, will forthwith report the names of such vagrants or persons called "contrabands," together with the names of any heretofore employed by them, to Mr. Charles B. Wilder, who has been appointed to superintend all things relating to and necessary for their welfare and condition.

The chiefs of the several departments will furnish to the superintendent, Mr. Wilder, a statement of the amounts paid, and amounts remaining due to each person so employed by them, under the following heads, viz:

- 1st. Amount earned by each.
- 2d. Amount paid in clothing to each.
- 3d. Amount paid in money to each.
- 4th. Amount earned for extra labor by each.
- 5th. Amount paid in money for extra labor to each.
- 6th. Amount due for extra labor to each.
- 7th. Gross amount due for monthly and extra labor to March 15, 1862, inclusive.

In addition to which a return will be made, embracing all labor performed by "contrabands" in the several departments anterior to Special Orders No. 72 and General Orders No. 34, and the amount, if any, paid to them during the same.

II. Special Orders No. 72 and General Orders No. 34 are hereby revoked, to take effect on and after March 15, 1862.

Hereafter all wages earned by persons of African blood in this department will be paid to them for their own use and support, under such regulations as may be devised by the superintendent; prices to be determined by individual skill, industry, and ability, and regulated by the standard usual in such cases, which may govern the several departments of the army at and near Fort Monroe.

As a part of the compensation, each laborer will receive one ration per day and quarters, until otherwise ordered.

The fund raised by Special Orders No. 72 and General Orders No. 34, in the hands of Captain Tallmadge, or any other person, for the support of the poor and needy of the so-called "contrabands," will be used for that purpose, or any other purpose which may be necessary for their benefit or comfort, under the direction of the superintendent, with discretionary powers, but subject to the approval of the military commander of this department.

By command of Major General Wool.

WILLIAM D. WHIPPLE,
Assistant Adjutant General.

HEADQUARTERS DEPARTMENT OF VIRGINIA,
Fort Monroe, March 22, 1862.

Captain Tallmadge, chief quartermaster, will pay the "contrabands" who have been employed for government purposes.

He will also deliver the clothing on hand intended for the "contrabands," and the money in his hands, to be appropriated out of the earnings of the "contrabands" for the benefit of the poor and needy of these people, to Mr. C. B. Wilder, appointed superintendent and agent under General Orders No. 15.

JOHN E. WOOL, *Major General.*