

Freedmen's Bureau

❑ In March 1865, Congress created the Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen, and Abandoned Lands in order to ease freed slaves' transition from enslavement to freedom.



- The Bureau is often referred to simply as the Freedmen's Bureau.
- In addition to supporting former slaves in beginning their new lives, the Bureau was also intended to help the vast numbers of homeless Whites who had been displaced or lost their property during the war.
- The federal government was operating as a relief agency tasked with overseeing the social welfare of the nation's citizens.

- In addition to assisting with basic needs such as food, clothing, shelter, and medical assistance, the Freedmen's Bureau was also responsible for introducing a system of free labor, overseeing approximately 3,000 schools for freed persons, settling disputes and enforcing contracts between the typically White landowners and their Black labor force, and securing justice for Blacks in state courts. The Bureau also worked to reunite families and legalize the marriages of former slaves.

THE FREEDMAN'S BUREAU!
 AN AGENCY TO KEEP THE **NEGRO** IN IDLENESS AT THE **EXPENSE** OF THE **WHITE MAN**.
 TWICE VETOED BY THE **PRESIDENT**, AND MADE A LAW BY **CONGRESS**.
 SUPPORT CONGRESS & YOU SUPPORT THE NEGRO. SUSTAIN THE PRESIDENT & YOU PROTECT THE WHITE MAN

IN THE SWEAT OF THY FACE SHALT THOU EAT THY BREAD

NEGRO TROOPS \$300
Each as a Bounty

WHITE Veterans \$100
Each as a Bounty

TWENTY-FIVE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS

For 1864 and 1865, the FREEDMAN'S BUREAU cost the Tax-payers of the Nation, at least TWENTY-FIVE BILLIONS OF DOLLARS. For 1866, THE SHARE of the Tax-payers of Pennsylvania will be about 800,000 OF DOLLARS. **GEAR** is FOR the Freedman's Bureau. **CLYMER** is OPPOSED to it.

Freedmen's Bureau and Tenant Farming System

- ❑ One of the greatest areas of success attributed to the Freedmen's Bureau is the basic education it provided to approximately 200,000 Blacks.
 - During slavery, it was illegal in most Southern states to teach slaves to read and write.



- White Southerners were worried that literate slaves would be better able to communicate to plan rebellion or to read newspapers reporting on the abolitionist efforts.
- Once the Civil War was over, it was essential that former slaves develop basic reading and math skills in order to not be taken advantage of when negotiating work contracts with White landowners.

- ❑ While the Freedmen's Bureau did help some former slaves acquire land unclaimed by its pre-war owners, Congress did not grant land or the absolute right to own land to all freed slaves.
 - Such land grants would have provided Blacks some level of economic independence.

Without it, and with few skills outside of farming, the newly freed slaves had few options other than entering the sharecropping, crop lien, or tenant farming system, where they often ended up working for former slaveholders in conditions very similar to slavery.



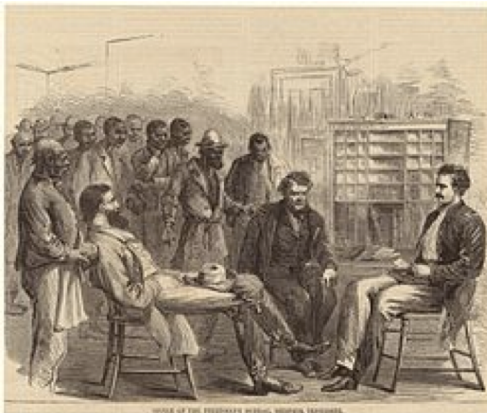
Freedmen's Bureau and Tenant Farming System

- ❑ Most of those people helped by the Freedmen's Bureau were Black.
 - However, some White Southerners also received ration assistance for food and clothing.
 - There is also some evidence in the detailed records kept by the Freedmen's Bureau that some American Indians drew rations from the agency.



- The records document some Cherokee and Creek tribal members on the ration rolls.
- As in the case of land grants, the Bureau lacked any enforcement authority on its own and lost its remaining ability to carry out its mission when Federal troops were withdrawn from the South.

- The lack of adequate funding restricted the number of agents working in the South.
- A Freedmen's Bureau agent was often the only Northern government representative in a former Confederate community.



- The agent was often harassed and threatened. Most White Southerners refused to support the Bureau's objectives and Northern politicians neglected to give it financial support, thus causing its demise.
- The Freedmen's Bureau ceased operation in 1872.