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Beaufort S.C. Aug 24th 1876

To His Excellency

Gov D.H. Chamberlain

Columbia S.C.

Sir;

I received a telegram from the Attorney General to call out the militia, if necessary; to put down the riot on the Combahee. I proceeded yesterday to the disturbed rice districts and found no rioters, nor had there been a riot; but I did find a large body of men numbering about three hundred who had refused to work for checks, a sample of which you will find inclosed. The cause of the strike was that the rice planters issued these checks instead of money, and that they are only redeemed in goods that must be purchased at exorbitant prices at the stores of the planters, and the whole amount taken in goods, or change given in checks, thus making it impossible for the

labourers to obtain any of the necessaries of life except through the planters: and as these checks are payable in 1880 or at the pleasure of the planter, other storekeepers will not receive them, nor will they buy medicines, or obtain the services of a physician in case of sickness.

Several of the strikers informed me that they had from five to ten dollars in checks and as yet had been unable to get money enough to pay their taxes.

The abolition of this check system will restore quiet satisfaction among the labourers in the rice districts of Beaufort and Colleton Counties, and I think it is due to them that some means be taken to protect them from the hardships that the check system involves. I am free to say that had the labourers been paid in money the rice fields would have been the most peaceful and orderly portion of the State.

I think you will agree with me, when I say that I wonder why these people have submitted to this imposition so long without without murmuring, and that there is no class of laboring people in the United States that would have submitted so long without striking. In some respects the evils that have followed these checks are worse than the evils of slavery. The sure road to peace and contentment in the rice fields is = good money for honest labor.

I found no lawless disposition among the strikers, many of them belonged to the Militia of the State and as such had arms, but not one of them appeared upon the ground with any kind of a weapon, except a club or a stick, saying that they knew it was against the law to bring their guns, but on the contrary I found from forty to sixty white men, mounted and armed with Spencer rifles sixteen shooters and double barreled shot guns;

the presence of these armed white men did much to alarm and excite the strikers.

The strikers numbered about three hundred, and of this number warrants had been issued by Trial Justice Fuller for seven of them who were charged with whipping two men of their own number who had gone to work contrary to the agreement made by them in their club. No injury was done to property or violence offered to any but the two who had gone to work.

Upon going up to the strikers I asked those to come out of the crowd against whom warrants had been issued; no sooner had the request been made than the seven men gave themselves up; they had previously objected to arrest by armed white men. The prisoners then went to Trial Justice Fuller's office and he not being at his office, at the request of the Sheriff they walked into Beaufort, fourteen miles distance, without a guard of any kind, and were

in Beaufort hours before the arrival of the Sheriff.

At about 3 o'clock P.M. the entire crowd had dispersed and no signs of a strike being visible on the Combahee, the planters having promised to pay cash once a week to the labourers. This was all they had asked.

I would suggest that Mr Fuller the Trial Justice at Gardeners Corner be removed as he is a large planter and one who issues checks to his labourers; therefore there must be naturally, dissatisfaction on the part of labourers when brought before him.

I find on enquiry that the prices charged for goods where checks are taken are as follows: Oristis $2^{\frac{00}{100}}$ per bushel; regular price $1^{\frac{00}{100}}$. Bacon 25¢ per lb; regular price from 10 to 15¢ molasses $1^{\frac{20}{100}}$ per gal regular price 40¢ and other articles in proportion.

Deputy Sheriff Sams acted in a very creditable manner, and is

entitled to much credit for his coolness and
bravery and the good judgment exercised
in the discharge of his duty.

I hope you will be able through
the Attorney General to adopt a remedy to
cure the evils of the check system, and
thus add to the peace of the rice districts
and the prosperity of the laborer.

I am, Sir,

Very Respectfully,

Robert Smalls

P.S. No Militia were needed, none were called
for - Mr. Fuller was nine miles from the scene
all the time.