

Four Documents on Disaffection in the South During the Civil War (1864 to 1865)

REPORT ON A BREAD RIOT IN SAVANNAH, GEORGIA (APRIL 1864)

A small "bread riot" occurred in Savannah [Georgia] on Tuesday last [April 17, 1864]. The News says that a combination of women numbering from fifty to one hundred, appeared at a grocery store on Whitaker street, when their demand for provisions being made, the proprietor was in the act of distributing bacon among them, when others of the party made a rush into the store and helped themselves to whatever they wanted. The same crowd also went to two other places on the same mission, where they obtained bacon, etc. Three of the women were arrested and taken to the guard house, and would be brought before the Mayor Thursday morning.

In relation to this affair, the News says:

That the present high prices of provisions have provided distress no one can doubt, and it is probable that some who participated in the riotous proceedings of yesterday were goaded to their course by pressure of want, but if we are rightly informed many if not the majority of them, had not even that excuse for the commission of acts of lawlessness. Be this as it may, there can be no necessity or justification for such acts of outrage and robbery. It is not generally the truly worthy deserving poor who resort to such measures, and those who thus set the laws and public propriety at defiance forfeit the sympathy of the community. If there is indeed want and suffering let the sufferers make their condition known in the right quarter, and a community that has never turned a deaf ear to the appeals of the helpless and needy will give them relief.

We trust that our city authorities will investigate this matter, ascertain who they are that truly need assistance, and take the proper steps for their relief. Such action is not only due to the wives and children of soldiers in the service, to the helpless poor, and to the peaceful and good name of our community, but also to the best interests of our city. While the mob spirit should be met with firmness, we should, in these times, act in accordance with the maxim of "help one another." Let the turbulent be rebuked, but let not the worthy and law abiding poor suffer.

"EXEMPT" (UNKNOWN), "TO GO, OR NOT TO GO" (JUNE 28, 1864)

To go or not to go, that is the question:
Whether it pays best to suffer pestering
By idle girls and garrulous old women,
Or to take up arms against a host of Yankees,
And by opposing get killed— To die, to sleep,
Git eout) and in this sleep to say we "sink
To rest by all our Country's wishes blest"
And live forever—(that's a consummation
Just what I'm after). To march, to fight—
To fight! perchance to die, aye ther's the rub!
For while I'm asleep, who'll take care of Mary
And the babes— when Billy's in the low ground,
Who'll feed 'em, hey! There's the respect

I have for them that makes life sweet;
For who would bear the bag to mill,
Plough Dobbin, cut the wheat, dig taters,
Kill hogs, and do all sorts of drudgery
If I am fool enough to get a Yankee
Bullet on my brain! Who'll cry for me!
Would patriotism pay my debts, when dead?
But oh! The dread of something after death—
That undiscovered fellow who'll court Mary,
And do my huggin— that's agony,
And makes me want to stay home,
Specially as I aint mad with nobody.
Shells and bullets make cowards of us all,
And blam'd my skin if snortin steeds,
And pomp and circumstance of War
Are to be compared with feather beds
And Mary by my side.

O.G.G. (UNKNOWN), LETTER TO THE EDITOR (FEBRUARY 17, 1865)

Mr. Editor: On Thursday last, about fifty women in Miller county, claiming to be soldiers' wives, made a raid upon the tithe depot at Colquit, in said county, and with axes, forced open the door, and abstracted therefrom about fifty sacks of government corn— about one hundred bushels. At last accounts from them, another raid of the same character was apprehended. Wonder why it is that soldiers' wives are reduced to the necessity of providing from themselves? Would not the proper authorities do well to look into the matter? If these women were forced by necessity to commit the depredation above alluded to— and even the wives of soldiers, absent in the defense of their country, their wants should be relieved at once.

Truly yours,
O.G.G.

COLUMBUS SUN, "THE CLASS THAT SUFFER" (FEBRUARY 17, 1865)

Upon poor women and children, upon soldiers who are toiling and bleeding for liberty, upon salaried men who have not the time, or who desire to speculate, the whole weight of this fearful struggle falls. Men of wealth, who are hoarding thousands, put up the piteous cry of exorbitant rates— more bitterly than ever just after increasing the prices one thousand fold, while upon ragged blood drenched soldiers, upon weary despairing, heart sick women, and those whose only dependence is a pitiful yearly sum must be made to bitterly suffer.

Non producers alone feel the war. Others can meet high rates with the same— those who speculate not, must shift as best they can. What matters life or death so avarice can be gratified? What is honor unattended by wealth? What is liberty, unless money can be hoarded by millions? What, if the country be ruined, its women ravished, its homes desolated, its altars violated and freedom forever perish— what matters all so the almighty dollar may be amassed in piles? What care men of the present day whether their country sinks so property may be secured, and the price at which liberty is bought rests as light as possible upon their patriotic shoulders?

That is right. Pile up wealth— no matter whether bread be drawn from the mouth of the soldier's orphan or the one-armed, one limbed hero who hungry walks your streets— take every dollar you can, pay out as little as possible, deprive your noble warriors of every comfort and luxury, increase in every way the necessaries of life, make everybody but yourself and non producers bear the taxes of the war; but be very careful to parade everything you give before the public— talk boldly on the street corners of your love of country, be a grand home general— and, when the war is over, point to your princely palace and its magnificent surroundings and exclaim with pompous swell “These are the results of my patriotism.”