38TH CONGRESS,
1ST SESSION.

S. 227.

IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

APRIL 12, 1864.

Mr. SUMNER, from the Select Committee on Slavery and Freedmen, reported the following bill; which was read and passed to a second reading.

A BILL

To establish a bureau of freedmen.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That an office is hereby created in the Treasury Department to be called the bureau of freedmen, meaning thereby such persons as have become free since the beginning of the present war, under the care of a commissioner, with an annual salary of four thousand dollars, who shall be appointed by the President, by and with the advice and consent of the Senate; and there shall be in the bureau a chief clerk, acting also as disbursing officer, under bonds to the United States, with an annual salary of two thousand dollars; and also such number of clerks, not exceeding two of each class, as shall be necessary, who shall be appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury.

SEC. 2. *And be it further enacted,* That the commis-

2 sioner shall have authority, under the direction of the Secre-
3 tary of the Treasury, to create departments of freedmen
4 within the rebel States, so far as the same may be brought
5 under the military power of the United States, and each de-
6 partment shall be under the supervision of an assistant com-
7 missioner, with an annual salary of two thousand dollars, to
8 be appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury, and with
9 authority to appoint local superintendents and clerks, so far
10 as the same may be needed, at a compensation not exceeding
11 the ordinary rate for similar services, subject, in all respects,
12 to the approval of the Secretary.

1 SEC. 3. *And be it further enacted,* That the military
2 commander within any department shall, on the application
3 of the assistant commissioner thereof, supply all needful mili-
4 tary support in the discharge of his duties; and any military
5 commander may be appointed assistant commissioner, without
6 increase of salary.

1 SEC. 4. *And be it further enacted,* That the commisioner,
2 under the direction of the Secretary of the Treasury, shall
3 have the general superintendence of all freedmen throughout
4 the several departments, and it shall be his duty especially to
5 watch over the execution of all laws, proclamations, and
6 military orders of emancipation, or in any way concerning
7 freedmen, and generally, by careful regulations, in the spirit
8 of the Constitution, to protect these persons in the enjoyment

9 of their rights, to promote their welfare, and to secure to them
10 and their posterity the blessings of liberty.

1 SEC. 5. *And be it further enacted,* That the assistant
2 commissioners shall have authority, within their respective
3 departments, to take possession of all real estate, with the
4 houses thereon, liable to sale or confiscation, or to any claim
5 of title by the United States, and not already appropriated to
6 government uses, and also to take possession of all personal
7 property found on such estate, and to rent or lease all such
8 real estate, or any part thereof, with the personal property
9 thereon, or in case no proper lessees can be found, then to
10 cause the same to be cultivated or occupied by the freedmen,
11 on such terms in either case and under such regulations as
12 the commissioner may determine: *Provided,* That no freed-
13 men shall be held to any service on any abandoned estate,
14 otherwise than according to voluntary contract reduced to
15 writing and certified by the assistant commissioner or local
16 superintendent, nor shall any such contract be for a longer
17 period than twelve months.

1 SEC. 6. *And be it further enacted,* That the assistant
2 commissioners and local superintendents shall be ready, as
3 advisory guardians, to aid the freedmen in the adjustment of
4 their wages, or where they have rented plantations or small
5 holdings, in the organization of their labor; that they shall
6 take care that the freedmen do not suffer from ill-treatment

7 or any failure of contract on the part of others, and that on
8 their part they perform their duty in the premises; that they
9 shall further do what they can as arbitrators, to reconcile and
10 settle any differences in which freedmen may be involved,
11 whether among themselves or between themselves and other
12 persons, and in case such differences are carried before any
13 tribunal, civil or military, they shall appear as next friends of
14 the freedmen, so far as to see that the case is fairly stated
15 and heard, and in all such proceedings there shall be no dis-
16 ability or exclusion on account of color.

1 SEC. 7. *And be it further enacted,* That leases here-
2 tofore made by the supervising special agents of the Treas-
3 ury Department, under the authority of the General Order
4 three hundred and thirty-one, of the Secretary of War,
5 dated October nine, eighteen hundred and sixty-three, and
6 in accordance with the regulations of the Treasury Depart-
7 ment, shall have the same effect as if made by assistant com-
8 missioners under this act; and such agents shall have the
9 same powers in the premises as are given herein to assistant
10 commissioners: *Provided,* That no lease shall be made by
11 them for a longer period than one year, and that immediately
12 upon the organization of any department of freedmen, such
13 agents shall cease to execute their functions within such de-
14 partment and shall deliver over to the assistant commissioner
15 thereof all property and papers held by them as agents. But

all expenses necessarily incurred by such agents in any department, prior to its organization under this act, shall be defrayed by the Secretary of the Treasury out of any moneys in his hands arising from the leases made by such agents.

SEC. 8. *And be it further enacted,* That the commissioner shall apply the proceeds arising from leases in the several departments to pay the salaries and other expenses under this act, so that the bureau herein established may become, at an early day, self-supporting; and any proceeds over and above the annual expense thereof shall be paid into the treasury of the United States.

SEC. 9. *And be it further enacted,* That it shall be the duty of all officers, civil and military, charged with the execution of any law, proclamation, or military order of emancipation, or in any way concerning freedmen, not mustered into, nor regularly engaged in, the military service, to make return to the commissioner of all their proceedings in execution thereof, under such regulations as shall, from time to time, be prescribed.

SEC. 10. *And be it further enacted,* That the commissioner shall, before the commencement of each session of Congress, make full report of his proceedings to the Secretary of the Treasury, who shall communicate the same to Congress. And the assistant commissioners shall make quarterly reports of their proceedings to the commissioner, and also

7 such other special reports as from time to time may be
8 required.

1864.—APRIL 12.—Read and passed to a second reading.