

S

St Augustine 24 May 1841

12th I have received your communication of the 5th inst. stating "I have to inform you that the accounts of the gentlemen who accompanied you to Tampa which you mention in your letter of the 5th inst. cannot be attended to until a report from Genl Armstrong to whom the matter has been referred for information shall be received."

Had General Armstrong accepted the services of the gentlemen, information from them might be required but as he declared them it is difficult to perceive that he is master of any information whatever since I stood from first to last in the position of a direct agent of the War Department in a matter distinct from his command. By referring to the order of your department of 18 January you will perceive that I was authorized and empowered to select five inhabitants of St Augustine and proceed with them to Head Quarters putting myself in communication with the Commanding General to whom I should present an accompanying letter. All this I accomplished and General Armstrong probably reported the simple facts of my arrival at Tampa (date and departure) (which is all in our report) long ago.

Being over intrusted with a mission of public importance and delicacy as ~~delicate~~ (however false it was rendered by the ^{doings} whims or childishness of others) my own report of the few dollars of expenditure should be sufficiently explanatory - my own signature should be the guarantee of each voucher but if coverage be so general that other explanations are necessary I would ^{wholly} suggest that the paymaster of this district would be a person best qualified for obtaining them since all the individuals engaged are within his call.

It is to be regretted that so many ceremonies of few crustations are permitted in the pay departments of our service by which individuals are often made to waste more time and trouble in obtaining their pay than in performing the service for which the pay is a compensation and the pay check is rendered a lottery wheel to speculators in the British

possessions where the Govt of every month is universal pay day
the public is served with economy energy and alacrity -
Government is the favored Customer - the favored employer
but with of every one; but with us where every disbaring
officer can organize so many forms of delay the whole Com-
munity are not at all times so ready to "serve their Country"
- the whole will not submit themselves to ~~the~~ tedious formalities
in which they see only a subterfuge for postponing payments
justly due and ~~therefore~~ ^{the number} ~~there~~ willing to ~~serve~~ Government
is confined to a comparatively few who are acquainted with
the "tricks of the trade" profit by their monopoly and estimate
the vexations of delay in the conditions of their contracts. By
the system of pre-constructed ready money such is converted into
non-revenue and the national expenditures ^{in cases} are increased
as in the ratio ~~two~~ between a family paying down for
every ^{each} thing and purchase and another keeping running accounts
with every body to be ^{paid (perhaps)} in some day of futurity

The system may "work well" ~~now~~ now; but
should the day arrive (and I hope to see it) when the energies of
the entire nation are required for common defense every department
(unless a change be made) will be rendered ^{more or less} inefficient by the general
hesitancy of individuals; but ^{as interests in 1861 or 1862 were} ~~but~~ ^{rather} "quits" and pay every man
promptly for every quart of corn or pound of meat actually
furnished and a most patriotic agency to serve govern-
ment would be universal should a sudden emergency arise. Our
Citizens who in their private relations look upon procrastination
about payments simply as subterfuges to disguise pecuniary
weak inability are quite too "free and independent" to treat
with what they regard ^{in disregard of better information} what they consider the procrastina-
tions of disbaring officers

Hon John Bell Sec^r of War
Washington

Respectfully
Wm Pitt
JCB

J Bell
27 May 1841

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PAPERS
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