

## Chapter Twelve

### “A House Divided”:

#### Lincoln vs. Douglas (1857-1858)

Throughout 1857 and the first half of 1858, Lincoln devoted himself to his law practice. In May 1858, when asked to speak publicly, he replied: “It is too early, considering that when I once begin making political speeches I shall have no respite till November. The labor of that I might endure, but I really can not spare the time from my business.”<sup>1</sup>

But Lincoln did take time to lecture on “Discoveries and Inventions.” In 1855, he and some friends, including Henry C. Whitney, had read and discussed George Bancroft’s recent oration on “The Necessity, the Reality, and the Promise of the Progress of the Human Race,” which celebrated mankind’s progress in the nineteenth century, a period described by Bancroft as “unequaled in its discoveries and its deeds.”<sup>2</sup> According to Whitney, Lincoln remarked “that he had for some time been contemplating the writing of a lecture on man . . . from his earliest primeval state to his present high development, and he detailed at length the views and opinions he designed to incorporate in his

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<sup>1</sup> Lincoln to Jediah F. Alexander, Springfield, 15 May 1858, Roy P. Basler et al., eds., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 2:446.

<sup>2</sup> Bancroft’s oration, delivered in New York on 20 November 1854, in Bancroft, Literary and Historical Miscellanies (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1857), 481-517.

lecture.”<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Norman B. Judd provided another version of the lecture’s origin. In 1856, Lincoln told her that one evening he and fellow lawyers on the circuit were discussing the date at which the brass age began. He recalled that Tubal Cain, the son of Lemach, worked in brass and that his brother Jubal made harps and organs. Checking his recollection in the Bible, he ransacked the Old Testament and “made a record of all the discoveries or inventions given in that book in the field of the arts and sciences.” Shortly thereafter he received an invitation to address the Young Men’s Literary Society in Bloomington. From the notes he had thus taken he fashioned his lecture.<sup>4</sup>

“Discoveries and Inventions,” based largely on material from the Bible and an encyclopedia, was, like Lincoln’s 1838 Lyceum address, ostensibly non-political; but in fact it contained a subtle put-down of Stephen A. Douglas.<sup>5</sup> At the time, the Little Giant was championing a program of bumptious, expansionistic nationalism known as “Young America,” a title that distinguished it from “old foggy” Whiggery and senior Democratic leaders. The term applied to a faction of the Democratic party eager to revive the jingoistic spirit of Manifest Destiny that had prevailed in the mid-1840s; to promote the expansion of the U.S. southward and westward; to emulate the contemporary Young Germany and Young Italy movements; to express sympathy for gallant, unsuccessful European revolutionaries, especially the Hungarians, whose bid for independence had been squashed by Russian troops in 1848; and to repudiate the stuffy conservatism of superannuated officeholders like Lewis Cass. Douglas, busily angling for the Democratic

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<sup>3</sup> Henry C. Whitney, Life on Circuit with Lincoln, ed. Paul M. Angle (1892; Caldwell, Idaho: Caxton Printers, 1940), 209; Wayne C. Temple, “Lincoln the Lecturer,” Lincoln Herald 102 (1999): 97.

<sup>4</sup> Reminiscences of Mrs. Norman B. Judd in the Chicago Tribune, 2 February 1900, and in Osborn Oldroyd, ed., The Lincoln Memorial: Album Immortelles (New York: Carleton, 1882), 522-23.

<sup>5</sup> Stewart Winger, Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2003), 23.

presidential nomination in 1852, was widely regarded as its chief spokesman.<sup>6</sup> Lincoln discussed “Young America” as if it were a person – Douglas – rather than a movement or a slogan. “Some think of him conceited, and arrogant,” Lincoln remarked, adding that Young America (i.e., Douglas) had reason “to entertain a rather extensive opinion of himself.” Lincoln poked fun at Young America for coveting Cuba (a favorite hobby of Douglas’s) and other territory: “He owns a large part of the world, by right of possessing it; and all the rest by right of wanting it, and intending to have it.” Citing a passage from Joseph Addison’s play Cato, Lincoln playfully remarked: “As Plato had for the immortality of the soul, so Young America has ‘a pleasing hope – a fond desire – a longing after’ ter[r]itory.” Young America also lusted after political office (in Douglas’s case, the presidency): “He has a great passion – a perfect rage – for the ‘new’; particularly new men for office.” Mocking Douglas’s popular sovereignty doctrine as well as his expansionism, Lincoln said: “he is a great friend of humanity; and his desire for land is not selfish, but merely an impulse to extend the area of freedom.” Alluding to Douglas’s fondness for liquor and cigars, Lincoln said: “His horror is for all that is old, particularly ‘Old Fogy’; and if there be any thing old which he can endure, it is only old whiskey and old tobacco.”

Turning from political satire, Lincoln became serious, asserting that “the discovery of America, and the introduction of Patent-laws” ranked among the most significant of all modern developments. He lauded not only patents like the one he himself held but the cast of mind that produced them: “To be fruitful in invention, it is indispensable to have a habit of observation and reflection.” He deemed written language

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<sup>6</sup> Merle E. Curti, “Young America,” American Historical Review 32 (1926): 34-55; Robert W. Johannsen, Stephen A. Douglas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 339-73; Winger, Lincoln, Religion, and Romantic Cultural Politics, 12-78.

“the great invention of the world” and called printing “the better half of writing.” The ignorance of the Dark Ages he considered “slavery of the mind” and regarded Gutenberg’s printing press as the emancipator that broke the mind’s shackles, creating a “habit of freedom of thought.” Such imagery came easily to a man who had emancipated himself from rural ignorance and backwardness through the written and printed word and who strove to end chattel slavery.<sup>7</sup>

The lecture failed to impress.<sup>8</sup> At Pontiac, an auditor reported that “the people generally were disappointed in his lecture as it was not well connected. He was, I thought, decidedly inferior to many a lecturer I have heard.”<sup>9</sup> In Jacksonville, where the audience was disappointingly small, he refused to accept the honorarium he had been promised and asked only for enough money to cover his expenses.<sup>10</sup> When a mere forty

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<sup>7</sup> Temple, “Lincoln the Lecturer,” 94-110; Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:437-42; 3:356-63. On Douglas’s fondness for alcohol and tobacco, see Johannsen, Douglas, 871; George Murray McConnell, “Recollections of Stephen A. Douglas,” Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, 1900, 48; Frank E. Stevens, “Life of Stephen Arnold Douglas,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 16 (1923): 350. Lincoln’s quote about Plato and the longing after territory is taken from Joseph Addison’s Cato, act 5, scene 1, where the eponymous hero, holding copy of Plato’s work on the immortality of the soul, says:

“It must be so — Plato, thou reason’st well! —  
Else whence this pleasing hope, this fond desire,  
This longing after immortality?”

Eugene F. Miller, “Democratic Statecraft and Technological Advance: Abraham Lincoln’s Reflections on ‘Discoveries and Inventions,’” The Review of Politics 63 (2001): 492n.

<sup>8</sup> \*Paul M. Angle, ed., Herndon’s Life of Lincoln: The History and Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln as Originally Written by William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik (Cleveland: World, 1942), 362; Jesse W. Weik, The Real Lincoln: A Portrait, ed. Michael Burlingame (1922; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 244-45. He delivered this lecture at Bloomington in April 1858, at Jacksonville and Springfield in 1859 and 1860. The editors of Lincoln’s writings believed that he gave two different lectures on the subject, but Wayne Temple has shown that the two were really different sections of the same lecture. Temple, “Lincoln the Lecturer,” 98.

<sup>9</sup> “Gus” to Mary P. Christian, Pontiac, Illinois, 28 January 1860, Harry E. Pratt, ed., Concerning Mr. Lincoln, in which Abraham Lincoln Is Pictured As He Appeared to Letter Writers of His Time (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1944), 21.

<sup>10</sup> Reminiscences of William Jayne, as recorded by J. McCan Davis, undated manuscript [probably 1898], Ida M. Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

people showed up to hear him in Bloomington, Lincoln cancelled the event.<sup>11</sup> Later he referred to his lecture as “rather a poor one.”<sup>12</sup>

Herndon called “Discoveries and Inventions” a “lifeless thing” and remarked that “Lincoln had not the fire, taste, reading, eloquence, etc., which would make him a lecturer.”<sup>13</sup> Although he did not give another such lecture, he did compose a fragment of a talk, probably written in the late 1850s, to be delivered to law students.<sup>14</sup>

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While not practicing law or lecturing, Lincoln followed closely the high political drama unfolding in Washington, where Douglas had declared war on the administration of President Buchanan.<sup>15</sup> During the autumn of 1857, pro-slavery Kansans, though a distinct minority of the territory’s population, had managed to dominate the constitutional convention held in the town of Lecompton, largely because Free Soilers, regarding the election for delegates as fraudulent, had shunned the polls. When the territory applied for statehood under a pro-slavery constitution passed at Lecompton, Buchanan in a special message on December 8 urged Congress to admit Kansas as a state, even though most fair-minded observers regarded the constitution as woefully unrepresentative of majority

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<sup>11</sup> Bloomington Pantagraph, 9 April 1859; J. H. Burnham to his father, Bloomington, 19 May 1860, in Harry E. Pratt, “When Lincoln Once Failed,” Bloomington Pantagraph, 6 January 1935.

<sup>12</sup> Lincoln to John M. Carson, 7 April 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:39.

<sup>13</sup> Herndon to Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 21 February 1891, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress; Herndon to Ward Hill Lamon, Springfield, 6 March 1870, Lamon Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>14</sup> Notes for a law lecture, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:81-82. These notes probably date from the late 1850s. In November 1858, Lincoln was invited to give a law lecture in Ohio; the invitation was renewed in January 1860. M. A. King to Lincoln, Cleveland, 15 November 1858 and 31 January 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. The date assigned by the editors of Lincoln’s Collected Works, [1 July 1850?], is probably inaccurate.

<sup>15</sup> The best study of Lincoln and the 1858 campaign is Allen C. Guelzo, Lincoln and Douglas: The Debates that Defined America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2008).

opinion among the settlers. Northerners were outraged by what they considered yet another example of Southern high-handed, arbitrary behavior and contempt for fair play. Douglas, suffering from “wounded pride,” fearful that if he supported the Lecompton Constitution he would doom his chances for reelection in 1858, resentful at Buchanan for ignoring his patronage requests, and incensed by the administration’s support for a clear miscarriage of popular sovereignty, immediately denounced the president’s message.<sup>16</sup> “By God sir, I made Mr. James Buchanan, and by God sir, I will unmake him!” the Illinois senator exclaimed. Buchanan warned him to beware of the melancholy fate of senators who had opposed President Andrew Jackson: “Mr. Douglas, I desire you to remember that no Democrat ever yet differed from an administration of his own choice without being crushed.” Douglas replied: “Mr. President, I wish you to remember that General Jackson is dead, sir.”<sup>17</sup> The Little Giant’s impulsive revolt, an uncharacteristic act for such a pragmatic champion of Democratic unity, cheered his party colleagues back home. “Your position takes the wind clean out of the B[lack] Republican leaders. Their only hope is that you will yet waver,” a constituent wrote.<sup>18</sup> Another declared: “You have adopted the only course that could save the Northern Democracy from

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<sup>16</sup> Peoria Transcript, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 10 April 1858; Don E. Fehrenbacher, Prelude to Greatness: Abraham Lincoln in the 1850s (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 55-57; Allan Nevins, The Emergence of Lincoln (2 vols.; New York: Scribner’s, 1950), 1:234-79; Johannsen, Douglas, 589-610.

<sup>17</sup> Charles Henry Ray to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 24 November 1857, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Douglas, speech in Milwaukee, New York Evening Post, 19 October 1860.

<sup>18</sup> G. C. Lanphere to Douglas, Galesburg, 24 December 1857, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

annihilation at the next election.”<sup>19</sup> Many Illinois Republicans also applauded his stand and considered backing him for reelection.<sup>20</sup>

While observing the “‘rumpus’ among the democracy over the Kansas constitution,” Lincoln was reminded of a case he had tried involving two contentious old farmers who had come to blows. Lincoln was hired to defend the winner of the fight, who was sued by the loser for assault and battery. When a witness for the plaintiff sought to exaggerate the importance of the fight, Lincoln asked him how much ground the pugilists had covered.

“About an acre, stranger,” replied the witness.

“Well, now, witness,” said Lincoln, “just tell me, wasn’t that just about the smallest crop of a fight off of an acre of ground that ever you heard of?”

“That’s so, stranger; I’ll be gol darned if it wasn’t!”

After this colloquy, the jury fined Lincoln’s client 10¢.<sup>21</sup>

Lincoln counseled his allies to “stand clear” of the fight, for “both the President and Douglas are wrong,” and Republicans “should not espouse the cause of either, because they may consider the other a little the farther wrong of the two.” He told Lyman Trumbull that Douglas was attempting “to draw off some Republicans on this dodge” and

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<sup>19</sup> James Williams to Douglas, Belvidere, 26 January 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

<sup>20</sup> This was especially true in central and southern Illinois. J. S. Roberts to Douglas, Springfield, 7 January 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

<sup>21</sup> Lincoln to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 30 November 1857, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:427; Peoria Transcript, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 25 February, copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 26 February 1858. See also W. M. Dickson, “Abraham Lincoln at Cincinnati,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine 69 (June 1884): 63; Alban Jasper Conant, “A Portrait Painter’s Reminiscences of Lincoln,” McClure’s Magazine 32 (March 1909): 516.

had made “some impression on one or two.”<sup>22</sup> Trumbull doubted that the “rumpus” would “amount to much, except perhaps to help us a little with the people.”<sup>23</sup>

In the East, the Little Giant was making an impression on many Republicans who regarded his bolt as providential, splitting the Democrats and smoothing the way for a Republican victory in 1860. Douglas met with Horace Greeley, editor of the influential New York Tribune, who believed that the senator might well join the Republican party and urged Illinoisans to support his reelection bid.<sup>24</sup> Greeley told readers of his paper that “no public man in our day has evinced a nobler fidelity and courage” than the Little Giant. “His course has not been merely right – it has been conspicuously, courageously, eminently so.”<sup>25</sup> The Tribune editor was convinced that Douglas could not be beaten, though privately he called the Little Giant “a low and dangerous demagogue” with “enormous self-conceit.”<sup>26</sup> When Greeley urged John O. Johnson, secretary of the Illinois Republican State Central Committee, to back Douglas, Johnson replied: “we shall without a doubt send one of the best republicans, ablest statesmen, and truest men, which can be found in [the] West, to fill the place which Mr Douglas now occupies. On the

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<sup>22</sup> Lincoln to Trumbull, Chicago, 30 November 1857, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:427.

<sup>23</sup> Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 5 December 1857, Trumbull Family Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>24</sup> Greeley to Schuyler Colfax, New York, 20 December 1857, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library; Jeter Allen Isely, Horace Greeley and the Republican Party, 1853-1861: A Study of the New York Tribune (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 238-45; Harlan Hoyt Horner, Lincoln and Greeley (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1953), 138-62; William Kellogg, “The Incidents of the Lecompton Struggle in Congress and the Campaign of 1858 in Illinois,” speech delivered in the House of Representatives, 12 March 1860 (pamphlet; Washington: Buell & Blanchard, 1860); Congressional Globe, 36<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 40 (7 December 1859). Greeley, Douglas, and Colfax denied the story. Washington States, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 2 October 1860. According to Greeley, Kellogg’s source was William H. Herndon. Greeley to Schuyler Colfax, New York, 12 December 1859, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library.

<sup>25</sup> New York Tribune, 17 May 1858; Johannsen, Douglas, 632.

<sup>26</sup> Greeley to Schuyler Colfax, New York, 5 February, 6, 17 May, 2 June 1858, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library; Greeley to Franklin Newhall, Ann Arbor, Michigan, 8 January 1859, copy, Greeley Papers, Library of Congress.



contrary, if an attempt is made to any extent, to get up sympathy for Mr Douglas, in his present position, it will inevitably result in our defeat.”<sup>27</sup>

Other leading papers in the East, including the Boston Atlas and Daily Bee, the Albany Evening Journal, the Hartford Courant, Newark Mercury, the Philadelphia Press, and the Atlantic Monthly, seconded Greeley’s motion.<sup>28</sup> “The general recognition of the principle of popular sovereignty is all that is needed to restore peace to the country, and to allay the agitation of the Slavery question,” declared the New York Times.<sup>29</sup> The Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican lauded Douglas as “the man who leads the battle against the administration and the slave power,” chastised Illinois Republicans for opposing him, and called “ridiculous” the “sensitiveness” and “ill-temper” they displayed in protesting against “eastern politicians” for supporting the Little Giant’s reelection bid. Lincoln they regarded as “a man of less intellectual ability and political power” than Douglas.<sup>30</sup> Even the antislavery National Era praised the Little Giant, much to the dismay of Illinois opponents of the peculiar institution.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> John O. Johnson to Horace Greeley, Springfield, 6 May 1858, Greeley Papers, Library of Congress. See also W. H. Powell to William Kellogg, Springfield, 26 December 1859, Kellogg, “Incidents of the Lecompton Struggle,” 9, and William Bailhache to William Kellogg, Springfield, 13 December 1859, ibid., 8.

<sup>28</sup> Richard Allen Heckman, Lincoln vs. Douglas: The Great Debates Campaign (Washington: Public Affairs Press, 1967), 28; Boston Atlas and Daily Bee, 18 June 1858; William Francis Hanna, “Abraham Lincoln and the New England Press, 1858-1860” (Ph.D. dissertation, Boston College, 1980), 7-13; Philadelphia Weekly Press, 24 July 1858.

<sup>29</sup> New York Times, 5 March 1858.

<sup>30</sup> “The Douglas Contest in Illinois,” Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 18 June 1858; “Did Mr. Douglas Think of Joining the Republicans?” ibid., 15 March 1860; George S. Merriam, The Life and Times of Samuel Bowles (2 vols.; New York: Century, 1885), 1:232-45. Republican Congressman George Ashmun of Springfield was a Douglas admirer. Ashmun to Douglas, Springfield, Mass., 6 November 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago. The editor of the Washington National Intelligencer rejoiced at Douglas’s reelection. Joseph C. G. Kennedy to Douglas, Washington, 10 November 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

<sup>31</sup> Stanley Harrold, Gamaliel Bailey and Antislavery Union (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1986), 204-5; William H. Herndon to Charles Sumner, Springfield, 24 April 1858, Sumner Papers, Harvard University. When Herndon protested to the editor, The National Era denied that it had endorsed Douglas.

Prominent New England Republicans like Henry Wilson, Truman Smith, Nathaniel P. Banks, and Anson Burlingame echoed Greeley.<sup>32</sup> On the floor of the House of Representatives, Massachusetts Congressman Burlingame called Douglas “gallant and gifted” and urged voters to support him and his Democratic allies, who “have kept the whiteness of their souls, and have made a record which has lain in light; and if my voice can have any weight with the young men of the country where those men dwell, I should say to them, ‘Stand by these men with all your young enthusiasm. Stand by them without distinction of party.’”<sup>33</sup> (In December 1858, Burlingame would express gratitude to Douglas Democrats for helping him win reelection.)<sup>34</sup>

Several other congressional Republicans agreed that the party should ally with Douglas. When Lyman Trumbull heatedly objected, Connecticut Senator James Dixon, who admired Douglas extravagantly, replied that he was “perfectly willing” to unite with the Little Giant in forming a coalition with Republicans “provided he adopts correct principles.” Republican colleagues from Maine, New York, Pennsylvania, and other states said, “So do we.”<sup>35</sup>

Along with Greeley’s editorials, Burlingame’s speech – the first pro-Douglas public feeler by a Republican congressman – infuriated his party colleagues in Illinois.<sup>36</sup>

“There seems to be a considerable notion pervading the brains of political wet nurses at

National Era (Washington), 29 April 1858; Herndon to Trumbull, Springfield, 7 May 1858, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>32</sup> Willard King, Lincoln’s Manager: David Davis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 125; Z. K. Pangborn to William Kellogg, Washington, 3 March 1860, in Kellogg, “Incidents of the Leocompton Struggle,” 10; Henry Wilson to Theodore Parker, 28 February 1858, Joseph Fort Newton, Lincoln and Herndon (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1910), 148.

<sup>33</sup> Quoted by William Kellogg, 13 March 1860, Congressional Globe.\*CHECK ONLINE

<sup>34</sup> James B. Sheridan to Douglas, Philadelphia, 8 December 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

<sup>35</sup> James Dixon to Gideon Welles, Washington, 6 March, 2 April 1858, Welles Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>36</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 3 and 5 May 1858.

the East,” observed the Chicago Press and Tribune in response to Burlingame, “that the barbarians of Illinois cannot take care of themselves.” Caustically the paper remarked that “Mr. Burlingame would look well on the stump with a Douglas orator whose every other sentence contained a whisky-inspired jeer at the ‘Black Republicans.’ . . . If the Republicans of Illinois should now sink all party differences and reelect Mr. Douglas, their party would be so disintegrated that the State would be lost to freedom in 1860, or if saved, saved only because he (Douglas) allowed it to be saved. The Republican party would be wholly at his mercy.”<sup>37</sup>

This indignation was shared by Lincoln, the obvious candidate to challenge the Little Giant.<sup>38</sup> “What does the New-York Tribune mean by it’s constant eulogising, and admiring, and magnifying [of] Douglas?” he asked Lyman Trumbull. “Does it, in this, speak the sentiments of the republicans at Washington? Have they concluded that the republican cause, generally, can be best promoted by sacraficing us here in Illinois?” Caustically he added, “If so we would like to know it soon; it will save us a great deal of labor to surrender at once.”<sup>39</sup>

Trumbull wondered how the Republicans ought to respond to the Little Giant’s revolt. “Should Douglas be driven out of the African democracy, as I think he will be, what are we to do with him? You know the ‘man who won the elephant’ found it difficult to dispose of him.”<sup>40</sup> He told Lincoln: “I do not feel just now either like embracing

Douglas, or assailing him. As far as he goes I believe him to be right, though his course

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<sup>37</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 21 April, copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 23 April 1858; J. W. Shaffer to E. B. Washburne, Freeport, 19 April 1858, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>38</sup> Kellogg, “Incidents of the Lecompton Struggle,” 8-9.

<sup>39</sup> Lincoln to Trumbull, Bloomington, 28 December 1857, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:430.

<sup>40</sup> Lyman Trumbull to John M. Palmer, Washington, 14 December 1857, quoted in George Thomas Palmer, A Conscientious Turncoat: The Story of John M. Palmer (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1941), 50.

now is utterly inconsistent with what it was a year ago.”<sup>41</sup> He added that he had “seen the difficulty which the laudation of Douglas by Republicans was likely to occasion us in Ill[inoi]s” and had “remonstrated with some of our friends about it; but his course was so unexpected to many & was looked upon as such a God send that they could not refrain from giving him more credit than he deserves.” Some Republicans in Washington “act like fools in running after and flattering Douglas. He encourages it and invites such men as Wilson, Seward, Burlingame, [Marcus J.] Parrott, etc., to come and confer with him and they seem wonderfully pleased to go.”<sup>42</sup> Republican Senator James Dixon of Connecticut wanted to establish a new party, with Douglas at its head, to overthrow the Southern-dominated Democracy.<sup>43</sup> The Little Giant told Senator Henry Wilson “that he hoped ‘the Republicans would do as little as possible about Candidates for Eighteen sixty. Let the Charleston convention [of the national Democratic Party] be held, and when they have made their ticket we will all combine and crush it into powder.’”<sup>44</sup>

Alluding to these politicians (especially Seward), John Wentworth told Lincoln: “you are sold for the Senate by men who are drinking the wine of Douglass at Washington.”<sup>45</sup>

Douglas later denied consorting with the Republicans, though abundant evidence

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<sup>41</sup> Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 25 December 1857, Trumbull Family Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>42</sup> Lyman Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 3 January 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Parrott was a Kansas politician.

<sup>43</sup> Dixon to Gideon Welles, Washington, 6, 8, 24 March, 4 April 1858, Welles Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>44</sup> William Schouler to S. P. Chase, Washington, 23 March 1858, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>45</sup> Wentworth to Lincoln, Chicago, 19 April 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. On Wentworth’s hostility toward Seward, see the Chicago Press and Tribune, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 4 June 1858.

suggests that he did in fact do so.<sup>46</sup> The Little Giant “repeatedly declared to leading Republicans that he had broken with the Democratic party, that he had ‘checked his baggage through,’ that ‘he had crossed the Rubicon and burned his boats’; that ‘hereafter he should be found in the opposition to the South.’” By going to a map and showing “the effect of his future measures for circumscribing the institution of Slavery,” he also assured Republicans “that the Kansas-Nebraska bill was really a free-soil measure.” He explained his plan to have the Pacific Railroad run southwest from the Missouri River so “that it would carry into all the country through which it passed a flood of emigration that would make Slavery impossible in any State along the route.”<sup>47</sup> According to Anson Burlingame, he, Schuyler Colfax, and Frank Blair “had frequent private interviews with Mr. Douglas in his [Douglas’s] own house,” during which he “freely made use of expressions of the deepest indignation against Southern dictation.”<sup>48</sup> Colfax described at length a three-hour interview he and Burlingame had with Douglas on December 14, 1857.<sup>49</sup> Blair also acknowledged that those meetings took place.<sup>50</sup> The Little Giant asked

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<sup>46</sup> Douglas, speech at Benton, Illinois, 16 September 1858, Missouri Republican, n.d., copied in the Chicago Press and Tribune, 24 September 1858; “Did Mr. Douglas Think of Joining the Republicans?” ibid., 15 March 1860; Kellogg, “Incidents of the Leecompton Struggle;” Greeley to Schuyler Colfax, New York, 12 December 1859, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library; speech of Anson Burlingame, August 1860, in Belfast, Maine, described in a letter dated Belfast, 23 August 1860, in the Bangor, Maine, Daily Union, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 11 September 1860.

<sup>47</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 17 March 1860.

<sup>48</sup> Speech of Anson Burlingame, August 1860, in Belfast, Maine, described in a letter dated Belfast, 23 August 1860, in the Bangor, Maine, Daily Union, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 11 September 1860.

<sup>49</sup> Colfax, “Memorandum of Interview, Burlingame & Colfax with Douglas, at his residence, Dec 14, 1857, 8½ to 11½ P. M.,” Colfax Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis. Burlingame attended this session and suggested that he, Banks, and Douglas meet the following day. The Little Giant agreed. Colfax conferred with Douglas on other occasions that winter.

<sup>50</sup> Isaac H. Sturgeon to John F. Snyder, St. Louis, 5 May 1860, Snyder Papers, Missouri Historical Society; Isaac H. Sturgeon to Douglas, St. Louis, 8 January 1860, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

Pennsylvania Congressman John Covode to request Trumbull to win the backing of Illinois Republicans for his reelection.<sup>51</sup>

Evidently speaking for his law partner, William Herndon complained to E. B. Washburne about rumors “that Illinois was to be chaffered for, and huckstered off without our consent, and against our will: – that we were to get Treason and the Traitor as the consideration for the sale –: that Douglas was to be elevated to the Senate again over the heads of long-pure and well tried Republicans.” In tones reminiscent of Lincoln’s heated complaint about John J. Hardin’s attempt to cheat him out of the nomination for Congress a decade earlier, Herndon insisted that “We in Illinois want to govern ourselves ‘in our own way.’ We want the man that we want, and have him, and him alone . . . . We in Illinois know pretty well who the pimps of traf[f]ic are. N[ew] York – Massachusetts – may sell their own men just as they please, but Illinois is not for sale. We are not willing to be sacrificed for a fiction – national maneuvers.” If the Republicans of the Prairie State were to run Douglas as their candidate for the senate, “the masses would drag us from power and grind us to powder.” The Little Giant’s “abuse of us as Whigs – as Republicans – as men in society, and as individuals, has been so slanderous – dirty – low – long, and continuous, that we cannot soon forgive, and can never forget.” If Douglas were to embrace the antislavery cause, “then it is sufficient time to ask us in Illinois to give up the great & honorable, and grab – raise the mean and undivine.”<sup>52</sup>

In addition to wooing members of Congress, Douglas sent an emissary to ask the editor of the Chicago Press and Tribune, Charles H. Ray, if he would support the Little

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<sup>51</sup> Covode told this to William Kellogg. Kellogg, “Incidents of the Lecompton Struggle.”

<sup>52</sup> Herndon to E. B. Washburne, Springfield, 10 April 1858, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress. Herndon expressed similar sentiments to Massachusetts Senator Charles Sumner. Herndon to Sumner, Springfield, 10, 24 April 1858, Sumner Papers, Harvard University.

Giant for reelection as a Republican.<sup>53</sup> “We are almost confounded here by his anomalous position,” Ray told Trumbull, “and know not how to treat him and his overtures to the Republican party.”<sup>54</sup> In January, Ozias M. Hatch, the “tall, spare, genial, and approachable” secretary of state of Illinois, noted that party leaders “concluded to Keep cool for the present, and see what might be developed in Congress.”<sup>55</sup> Congressman Elihu B. Washburne allegedly visited Ray at the behest of Horace Greeley seeking support for Douglas. Ray and other editors, after some discussion, rejected Greeley’s overture.<sup>56</sup> Ray urged Trumbull to “tell our friends in the House [presumably including Washburne], who may be more zealous than discreet, that we in Illinois have not delegated our powers to them, and that we may not ratify bargains that they make – in a word, that among the inducements which they hold out to the ‘distinguished Senator’ to ensure the continuance of his fight with the Administration, they must not hold up the Senatorship as the prize of his defection. I take it, that it is a foregone conclusion that Abm. Lincoln will be the next Republican candidate for Mr. Douglas’ seat, and that he will occupy it if we have a majority, or, that we must make up our minds to a fight as soon as his friends can make a good ready.”<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> Jay Monaghan, The Man Who Elected Lincoln (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1956), 100. In March 1858, Ray informed Jesse K. Dubois that Douglas’s mouthpiece in Chicago, James W. Sheahan, had written expressing his wish that Republicans and anti-Nebraska Democrats make common cause in all doubtful counties. Dubois to Trumbull, Springfield, 22 March 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>54</sup> Ray to Trumbull, Chicago, 18 December 1857, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>55</sup> Indianapolis correspondence by Charles A. Page, 30 April 1865, in Charles A. Page, Letters of a War Correspondent, ed. James R. Gilmore (Boston: L. C. Page, 1899), 377; Hatch to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 14 January 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>56</sup> Monaghan, Man Who Elected Lincoln, 101.

<sup>57</sup> Ray to Trumbull, Chicago, 9 March 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

It is not clear if Washburne actually lobbied on behalf of the Little Giant.<sup>58</sup> According to one of Long John Wentworth's correspondents, the Galena congressman was doing so.<sup>59</sup> When Lincoln mentioned this rumor to Washburne, he emphatically denied it, though he did tell Herndon in April: "I have said, God speed him [Douglas]. I am rejoiced to see him laboring so manfully in a direction to make some amends for the injury he has brought upon the country. He is doing a grand service for the republican party, and for one, while he pursues his present course, I shall not lay a straw in his path. He is fighting this Lecompton swindle in all its phases, with boldness and determination. If things go on, as it now seems inevitable, if he be not with us, a vast number of his followers will be, and hence I cannot see the wisdom of abusing him, or them, as matters stand now. I have no fears that the republican party is to be swallowed by them. I say leave open wide the doors and invite all to come on to our platform and greet them with kind words. Our party is not so large but what it will hold a few more."<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> On Washburne's conduct in this regard, see Russell K. Nelson, "The Early Life and Congressional Career of Elihu B. Washburne" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of North Dakota, 1953), 159-62.

<sup>59</sup> Wentworth to Lincoln, Chicago, 19 April 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>60</sup> Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 28 April 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:443-44; Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 2 and 22 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Washburne to Herndon, Washington, 28 April 1858, Washburn Family Papers, Washburn Memorial Library, Norlands, Maine. Wentworth's friend Samuel L. Baker had seen a letter from Washburne to Charles L. Wilson, editor of the Chicago Journal, which Wilson had then shown to Wentworth. Wilson later said that Wentworth, whom he called a "notorious and unmitigated scoundrel," had tried to curry favor with Lincoln by sending him "a mean, cowardly and willful misrepresentation" of Washburne's letter to Wilson. Wilson to Washburne, Chicago, 3 May 1858, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; C. H. Ray to Washburne, Chicago, 2 May [1858 – misfiled 1861], ibid.; Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 6 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Washburne's letter to Wilson did not indicate that he favored Douglas over Lincoln for the senate. Washburne to Wilson, Washington 12 April 1858, copied in Wilson to the editor, Polo (Illinois) Advertiser, 16 March 1860, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress. In May, Washburne assured F. G. Petrie in a letter that appeared in the press that he had written to the editor of the Chicago Journal endorsing Lincoln, not Douglas, and emphatically reiterated this support for Lincoln. Washburne to Petrie, Washington, 22 June 1858, New York Times, 8 June 1858.



Herndon and his partner both “turned a deaf ear” to insinuations that Washburne was flirting with Douglas.<sup>61</sup> Lincoln speculated to the congressman that the rumor was probably based on “some misconstruction, coupled with a high degree of sensitiveness,” and assured him: “I am satisfied that you have done no wrong.”<sup>62</sup>

Still, Lincoln was less enthusiastic than Washburne about Douglas. To Lincoln it appeared obvious that the Little Giant, in opposing Buchanan on a matter of fact (i.e., whether the Lecompton Constitution truly reflected the views of most Kansans), continued to side with the president on matters of general policy. In May, Lincoln told a friend: “there remains all the difference there ever was between Judge Douglas & the Republicans – they insisting the Congress shall, and he insisting that congress shall not, keep slavery out of the Ter[r]itories before & up to the time they form State constitutions.” By making common cause to fight the Lecompton constitution, neither the Illinois senator nor the Republicans “conceded anything which was ever in dispute between them.”<sup>63</sup>

Four months earlier, the Springfield Journal had run an editorial, which may well have been written by Lincoln, questioning Douglas’s sincerity. During the 1856-57 session of Congress, the Little Giant had seemed unconcerned about fair play in Kansas: “if he did not cheer on the Border Ruffians in their work of devastation and plunder, we all know how he reviled and defamed the Free State men and Republicans, not only as the authors of these outrages, but as seeking to prolong the troubles in Kansas.”

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<sup>61</sup> Herndon to Washburne, Springfield, 21 April 1858, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; C. H. Ray to Washburne, Chicago, 2 May [1858 – misfiled 1861], ibid.

<sup>62</sup> Lincoln to Washburne, Urbana, 26 April 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:444.

<sup>63</sup> Lincoln to Jediah F. Alexander, Springfield, 15 May 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:446.

Republicans “most cheerfully give him all due credit for his recent condemnation of the Lecompton Constitution; but we demand to know why he did not lift up his voice in defense of popular sovereignty in Kansas, when Lawrence, Leavenworth and Osawatomie were ravaged, when he knew, or ought to have known, that till the present time there has been scarcely an office-holder in the whole Territory who was not notorious, during all the troubles there, as connected with the bandits who robbed and murdered the people, fleeing from their burning homes. He knows that Mr. Buchanan, instead of handling these men as pirates and outlaws, has appointed them to office in the midst of a people they have pillaged.”<sup>64</sup>

While some of Lincoln’s friends understandably dismissed Douglas’s strategy as “a mere election trick,” others were tempted to ally with anti-Nebraska Democrats.<sup>65</sup> Pascal P. Enos told Henry Wilson that although he supported Lincoln for the senate, “I am not [one] of those because heretofore opposing a man feel myself bound to continue the opposition under all circumstances.”<sup>66</sup> In March, Ozias M. Hatch and Jesse K. Dubois asked Lincoln about overtures being made by Douglas’s friends.<sup>67</sup> In reply, Lincoln urged them to resist Douglas’s siren song: “we must never sell old friends to buy old enemies. Let us have a State convention, in which we can have a full consultation; and till which, let us all stand firm, making no committals as to strange and new combinations.”<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> Editorial “Who Are Agitators?” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 12 January 1858.

<sup>65</sup> Gustave Koerner to Lyman Trumbull, Belleville, 29 June 1858, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>66</sup> Pascal P. Enos to Henry Wilson, Springfield, 12 April 1858, P. P. Enos Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>67</sup> Hatch and Jesse K. Dubois to Lincoln, [Springfield], 23 March 1858, Roy P. Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, First Supplement, 1832-1865 (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1974), 30n. They enclosed letters from Charles H. Ray and Norman B. Judd.

<sup>68</sup> Lincoln to Hatch, Lincoln, 24 March 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, First Supplement, 29.

In December 1857, Lincoln prepared a speech angrily warning Republicans not to flock to Douglas's banner, no matter how much they might admire his attacks on the Buchanan administration.<sup>69</sup> He scorned the demagoguery of the Little Giant, whom he called "the most dangerous enemy of liberty, because the most insidious one."<sup>70</sup> He was especially incensed by remarks Douglas had made in June 1857 about racial "amalgamation." Then the Little Giant had charged that whoever believed that blacks were included in the Declaration of Independence's assertion that "all men are created equal" must necessarily "license him [the black man] to marry a white woman." According to Douglas, the Founding Fathers "had witnessed the sad and melancholy results of the mixture of the races in Mexico, South America and Central America, where the Spanish, from motives of policy, had admitted the negro and other inferior races to citizenship, and consequently to political and social amalgamation. The demoralization and degradation which prevailed in the Spanish and French colonies, where no distinction on account of color or race was tolerated, operated as a warning to our Revolutionary fathers to preserve the purity of the white race." The Founders understood "the great natural law which declares that amalgamation between superior and inferior races brings their posterity down to the lower level of the inferior, but never elevates them to the high level of the superior race."<sup>71</sup> (In the 1858 campaign, Douglas would assert that the "experience of the world in all ages proves that the negro is incapable of self-government

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<sup>69</sup> The draft of a speech, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:248-54. The editors of Lincoln's Collected Works think this document may have been a speech delivered at Edwardsville on May 18, or might have been written several weeks earlier. It seems likely that it was in fact written soon after Douglas's speech of December 9, 1857. See Fehrenbacher, Prelude to Greatness, 89-94. In his edition of Lincoln's writings, Fehrenbacher sensibly dates this document late December 1857.

<sup>70</sup> Lincoln to Samuel Galloway, Springfield, 28 July 1859, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:394.

<sup>71</sup> Speech of 12 June 1857 in Springfield, New York Herald, 3 July 1857. This was a common Democratic argument. See "What Would be the Effect of Negro Equality?" Illinois State Register (Springfield), 9 October 1858.

in all climes,” prompting a Republican paper to ask “what the experience of the world has to say on the subject of French, or German, or Russian, or Irish, or Italian capacity for self-government?”<sup>72</sup> Also in that campaign he was to argue that all presidents from the time of Washington had endorsed the proposition that blacks were not citizens by refusing to grant them passports.)<sup>73</sup>

Lincoln also condemned a resolution (allegedly written by Douglas) endorsed by Morgan County Democrats, who declared their opposition “to placing negroes on an equality with white men, by allowing them to vote and hold office, and serve on juries, and testify in the courts against white men, and marry white women, as advocated by those who claim that the declaration of Independence asserts that white men and negroes were created equal by the Almighty.”<sup>74</sup> Lincoln further deplored the Little Giant’s allegation, made in November 1857, that “Black Republicans . . . will allow the blacks to push us from our sidewalk and elbow us out of car seats and stink us out of our places of worship.”<sup>75</sup> Douglas’s indifference to the evils of slavery, which contrasted starkly with the Republican view that the peculiar institution was “not only morally wrong, but a ‘deadly poison’ in a government like ours, professedly based on the equality of men,” aroused Lincoln’s ire. Republicans, he advised, should not “oppose any measure merely because Judge Douglas proposes it.” Indeed, they ought to join him in assaulting the Lecompton constitution, which “should be throttled and killed as hastily and as heartily as a rabid dog.” But the “combined charge of Nebraskism, and Dred Scottism must be

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<sup>72</sup> Speech delivered to a deputation of Germans in Chicago, New York Times, 6 and 12 August 1858.

<sup>73</sup> Speech at Lacon, Illinois, 19 August, Chicago correspondence, 23 August, New York Evening Post, 27 August 1858.

<sup>74</sup> Jacksonville Sentinel, 16 October 1857, quoted in Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:450n.

<sup>75</sup> Chicago Daily Democratic Press, 12 November 1857, quoted ibid.

repulsed, and rolled back. The deceitful cloak of ‘self-government’ wherewith ‘the sum of all villainies’ [i.e., slavery] seeks to protect and adorn itself, must be torn from it’s hateful carcass.”

Most Illinois Republicans agreed that Douglas was hardly a fit champion of their cause, no matter how vehemently he combated the Lecompton constitution.<sup>76</sup> “We are not about to embrace him as a political brother, or to canonize him as a Republican saint,” said the Chicago Press and Tribune. “He is neither one or the other, but, in this cause he is an efficient co-worker, and we shall treat him accordingly.” The Little Giant “has recanted none of his political heresies, nor has he given evidence of any intention of doing so. . . . [I]t is asking too much of the freemen of Illinois . . . to support a man for the Senate who, if not avowedly a champion of slavery expansion, gives all his influence to it, and against the personal and political rights of free white people who depend upon their own honest industry for a livelihood.”<sup>77</sup> The Clinton Central Transcript observed that a “penitent prostitute may be received into the church but she should not lead the choir” and speculated that if the Republicans “had no man like Abraham Lincoln, the peer of any man in integrity and more than the peer of any man in Illinois in Websterian eloquence, in whose favor they are perfectly united, and who is at the same time acceptable to the balance of the opposition, there might be grounds for the belief that some of them would lend a hand in again electing Judge Douglas. They do not feel like sacrificing the gallant Lincoln upon the shrine of the man who turned traitor upon

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<sup>76</sup> Heckman, Lincoln v. Douglas, 31; Thomas J. McCormack, ed., Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896 (2 vols.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1909), 2:54-56; Albert J. Beveridge, Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858 (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 2:545-47; Horace Greeley, Recollections of a Busy Life (New York: J. B. Ford, 1869), 357.

<sup>77</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 19 March and 10 July 1858.

treason, even though his future should be indorsed by Greeley & Co.”<sup>78</sup> The Illinois State Journal asserted that Republicans “intend to stand firmly by their own colors and let the Douglas men ‘skin their own skunks.’”<sup>79</sup> In response to a feeler put out by the editor of Douglas’s Chicago newspaper, State Auditor Jesse K. Dubois remarked: “It is asking too much for human nature . . . to now surrender to Judge Douglas after having driven him by force of Public opinion to do what he has done to quietly let him step foremost in our ranks now and make us all take back seats.”<sup>80</sup>

Echoing Dubois were many others, including a newspaper editor in Dixon: “We want no such ominous wooden horses run into our camp. All eyes are turned toward Mr. Lincoln as . . . the unanimous choice of the people.”<sup>81</sup> Charles Henry Ray, who urged Republicans to shun Douglas, insisted that “Abe Lincoln cannot be overlooked – should not be.”<sup>82</sup> Gustave Koerner recommended that Republicans make the Douglasites “understand, that Lincoln is our man” and that “we will try every means to elect men favorable to him.”<sup>83</sup> Congressman William Kellogg recommended that his colleagues not

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<sup>78</sup> Clinton Central Transcript, 4 June and 9 July 1858.

<sup>79</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 19 April 1858.

<sup>80</sup> Dubois summarized a letter he had just received from James W. Sheahan after Sheahan’s return from Washington. Dubois to Trumbull, Springfield, 8 April 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress. Daniel Brainard approached Charles H. Ray with the proposition that the Republicans run Douglas for the U.S. House from the Springfield district. Ebenezer Peck to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 15 April 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>81</sup> Dixon Republican and Telegraph, in Fehrenbacher, Prelude to Greatness, 61. See Abraham Jonas to Lyman Trumbull, Quincy, 11 April 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Herndon to Trumbull, Springfield, 12 April 1858, ibid.; John H. Bryant to Lincoln, Princeton, 19 April 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>82</sup> Charles Henry Ray to E. B. Washburne, Chicago, [15 April 1858?], Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>83</sup> Gustave Koerner to O. M. Hatch, Belleville, 20 April 1858, Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

pressure Illinois Republicans to support Douglas.<sup>84</sup> A Chicago Republican told Greeley: “We all think more highly of Douglas than we did a year ago, but still we hope to be pardoned for preferring one of the ‘truest and most effective advocates of Republican principles’ [i.e., Lincoln] to the Little Giant.”<sup>85</sup>

Most party faithful believed that Lincoln had, by his exertions in 1854 and 1856, earned the senatorial nomination; regarded Lincoln as their most capable leader; and felt that it was only fair to reward the magnanimity he had shown by bowing to Trumbull in the 1855 senate race.<sup>86</sup> Heatedly John M. Palmer protested against the “Wall Street Operation” by which “Lincoln to whom we are under great obligations and all of our men . . . are to be kicked to one side and we are to throw up our caps for Judge Douglass and he very coolly tells us all the time that we are abolitionists and Negro Worshippers and that he accepts our votes as a favor to us.”<sup>87</sup> In support of his candidacy, Long John Wentworth’s paper said: “Lincoln has worked hard and had nothing.”<sup>88</sup>

Democrats alleged that Wentworth was being hypocritical, praising Lincoln publicly while secretly maneuvering to win the nomination himself.<sup>89</sup> “Under no possible circumstances will Wentworth allow Lincoln to be chosen,” declared Douglas’s organ, the Chicago Times, whose editor reported that Wentworth “openly declares that Lincoln

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<sup>84</sup> William Kellogg to O. M. Hatch, Washington, 5 May 1858, Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>85</sup> “A Republican” to the editor, Chicago, [18?] May, New York Tribune, 27 May 1858.

<sup>86</sup> Josiah M. Lucas to Lincoln, Washington, 3 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Lyman Trumbull to John M. Palmer, 19 June 1858, in Palmer, “A Collection of Letters from Trumbull to Palmer,”\* 40; Fehrenbacher, Prelude to Greatness, 62.

<sup>87</sup> Palmer to Lyman Trumbull, Carlinville, 25 May 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>88</sup> Chicago Democrat, 8 May 1858.

<sup>89</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 28 April 1858; Chicago Daily Times, 7 October 1858.

can never get elected.”<sup>90</sup> The Illinois State Register warned that “the Chicago autocrat of black republicanism will have complete control of a majority of black republican votes in the next legislature, and if that party should have a majority . . . he will control the nominations of its caucus.”<sup>91</sup> In truth, though Wentworth may have harbored Senatorial ambitions, he realized that his chances were poor, for his abrasive, arrogant personality had alienated many Republicans as well as his former allies in the Democratic party. He therefore did nothing to promote his own candidacy.<sup>92</sup> Lincoln bemoaned the “everlasting croaking about Wentworth” in the Democratic press, which cynically tried to frighten voters into supporting Democratic candidates for the legislature in order to prevent such an outcome.<sup>93</sup> When Democrats alleged that Lincoln had gained Wentworth’s support by agreeing to back Long John for governor, Lincoln denied it.<sup>94</sup> “I am not directly or indirectly committed to any one” for governor, he told Charles L. Wilson. “I have had many free conversations with John Wentworth; but he never dropped a remark that led me to suspect that he wishes to be Governor. Indeed, it is due to truth to say that while he has uniformly expressed himself for me, he has never hinted at any condition.”<sup>95</sup>

Anger at Eastern Republicans focused on Seward as well as Greeley and Burlingame. Among the critics of the New York senator were Norman B. Judd,

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<sup>90</sup> Lincoln to Trumbull, Springfield, 23 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:472; Chicago Times, n.d, copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 21 May 1858; James W. Sheahan to Charles Lanphier, Chicago, 23 May 1858, Lanphier Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>91</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 21 May 1858.

<sup>92</sup> Fehrenbacher, Chicago Giant, \* 157; Fehrenbacher, Prelude to Greatness, 65-68.

<sup>93</sup> Lincoln to Trumbull, Springfield, 23 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:472. Illinois State Register (Springfield), 4 January, 21 May, 4 June 1858; Fehrenbacher, Prelude to Greatness, 65-66.

<sup>94</sup> E. T. Bridges to Lincoln, Fulton City, 18 May 1858, and Charles L. Wilson to Lincoln, Chicago, 31 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>95</sup> Lincoln to Wilson, Springfield, 1 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:457.



Wentworth, and Herndon, who had been praising Lincoln to his Eastern friends.<sup>96</sup>

Alluding to the New York senator, Herndon asked Theodore Parker to “tell him to keep his fingers out of our fight – keep his wishes to himself, if he is for Douglas.”<sup>97</sup> In March, Herndon visited Washington, New England, and the Middle Atlantic states, ostensibly as a mere sightseer, but in reality acting as his partner’s eyes and ears.<sup>98</sup> (As president, Lincoln would dispatch his personal secretaries and many others on such missions.) Lincoln was “dejected” by Greeley’s support of Douglas, saying (in substance), that the Tribune editor “is not doing me, an old Republican and a tried antislavery man, right. He is talking up Douglas, an untrue and an untried man, a dodger, a wriggler, a tool of the South once and now a snapper at it – hope he will bite ‘em good – but I don’t feel that it is exactly right to pull me down in order to elevate Douglas. I like Greeley, think he intends right, but I think he errs in this hoisting up of Douglas, while he gives me a downward shove. I wish that someone would put a flea in Greeley’s ear – see Trumbull, Sumner, Wilson, Seward, Parker, Garrison, Phillips, and others, and try and turn the currents in the right directions. These men ought to trust the tried and true men.”<sup>99</sup>

Taking the hint, Herndon packed his bags and headed for Washington. There he met with Douglas, who told him: “Give Mr. Lincoln my regards when you return, and tell him I have crossed the river and burned my boat.” He added “that he and the Republicans would be together soon.” From Trumbull, Herndon learned that some Eastern

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<sup>96</sup> Judd to Trumbull, Chicago, 7 March 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; David Donald, Lincoln’s Herndon (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 110-11.

<sup>97</sup> Herndon to Theodore Parker, Springfield, 23 August 1858, Herndon-Parker Papers, University of Iowa.

<sup>98</sup> Joseph Fort Newton said “Lincoln doubted the propriety of such a journey, which, by virtue of their close relations, might be misconstrued; but Herndon overruled all objections.” Newton, Lincoln and Herndon, 150. No source given.

<sup>99</sup> Herndon to Weik, Springfield, 23 December 1855, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

Republicans were scheming to betray their Illinois counterparts by supporting Douglas's reelection bid. Rumor had it that Greeley, Seward, Weed, Henry Wilson, and Douglas struck a bargain whereby the Little Giant pledged to support Seward for president in 1860 if the editor of the Tribune would back Douglas's reelection in 1858.<sup>100</sup> Evidently the Little Giant in the winter of 1857 had agreed to help defeat the Lecompton constitution in return for Greeley's promise to back Douglas and other anti-Lecompton Democrats for reelection.<sup>101</sup>

From Washington, Herndon traveled to New York, where he called on Greeley, who, he reported, "evidently wants Douglas sustained and sent back to the Senate." Greeley "talked bitterly – somewhat so – against the papers in Ill[inoi]s – and said they were fools." When Herndon referred to the Little Giant as one who had "abused and betrayed" the North, Greeley replied: "Forget the past and sustain the righteous." The "Republican standard is too high," the editor declared; "we want something practical." The party platform, in his view, was "too abstract" and "ought to be lowered – 'slid down.'" <sup>102</sup> After returning to Illinois, Herndon informed Greeley that Republicans there

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<sup>100</sup> \*Angle, ed., Herndon's Lincoln, 32; Herndon to Theodore Parker, Springfield, 1 June, 20 September, 23 November 1858, Herndon-Parker Papers, University of Iowa; Illinois State Register (Springfield), 20 April 1858; Chicago Democrat, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 21 May 1858; Chicago Press and Tribune, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 4 June 1858; New York Herald, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 19 April 1858; Salmon P. Chase to Henry Reed, Columbus, Ohio, 11 November 1858, copy, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Glyndon Van Deusen, William Henry Seward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 191. Glyndon Van Deusen doubted that such a bargain was struck. Glyndon G. Van Deusen, Horace Greeley, Nineteenth-Century Crusader (New York, Hill and Wang, 1953), 234n33; Van Deusen, Seward, 191-92. Herndon stated that the plan went awry when Trumbull refused to sacrifice Lincoln. Herndon to Theodore Parker, Springfield, 23 November 1858, Herndon-Parker Papers, University of Iowa.

<sup>101</sup> Isely, Greeley and the Republican Party, 239, 245, 248. Those anti-Lecompton Democrats included John Hickman of Pennsylvania, John G. Davis of Indiana, and Horace F. Clark and John B. Haskin of New York.

<sup>102</sup> Herndon to Lincoln, Boston, 24 March 1858, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress; Herndon to Theodore Parker, Springfield, 31 August 1858, Herndon-Parker Papers, University of Iowa. Cf. Greeley to Herndon, New York, 6 October 1858, Newton, Lincoln and Herndon, 223.

could not possibly support Douglas, for “it would crush us and our principles so fine that God alone could find the powered fragments.” Moreover, “We want to be our own masters; and if any politician wants our respect – confidence or support now or hereafter let him stand aloof and let us alone. . . . Douglas’ abuse of Republicanism – of Whiggery – as a party and as individuals, has been so bitter – low – long, and intense that it cannot be forgiven soon and never forgotten.” Three months thereafter, Herndon scoffed at Greeley’s belief that Douglas might join the Republicans: “Did Douglas ever give an inch in his whole political life,” he asked. “He is the most imperious and selfish man in America. He is the greatest liar in the world.”<sup>103</sup> Herndon doubtless wrote in consultation with Lincoln, who did not directly communicate with Greeley in 1858.

Seward’s role in Illinois politics is not clear. Privately, he lauded Douglas and other anti-Lecompton Democrats: “God forbid that I should consent to see freedom wounded, because my own lead, or even my own agency in serving it, should be rejected. I will cheerfully cooperate with these new defenders of this sacred cause in Kansas, and I will award them all due praise for their large share of merit in its deliverance.”<sup>104</sup> Yet when publicly accused of supporting Douglas, Seward through his allies vehemently denied it.<sup>105</sup> In the summer, Seward urged his Illinois friend Samuel L. Baker to visit the prominent Whig John Bell of Tennessee and get him to endorse Lincoln. Baker reported to Lincoln that “Seward & Weed both assured me they would do all they could to help us

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<sup>103</sup> Herndon to Greeley, Springfield, 8 April and 20 July 1858, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library. Cf. Herndon to E. B. Washburne, Springfield, 10 April 1858, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; Herndon to Sumner, Springfield, 10 and 24 April 1858, Sumner Papers, Harvard University.

<sup>104</sup> Thornton Kirkland Lothrop, William Henry Seward (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1899), 178.

<sup>105</sup> James Watson Webb and George C. Bates to Charles L. Wilson, Tuckahoe, New York, 9 June 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

with money & otherwise.”<sup>106</sup> In December 1858, Douglas, in conversation with Charles Henry Ray, spoke freely about his cooperation with Seward and convinced Ray that the two senators had struck a bargain the previous year.<sup>107</sup> Warned that Seward’s allies in Illinois might balk if Lincoln’s candidacy were regarded as an anti-Seward gesture, Lincoln scouted reports that Seward or Greeley actually conspired with Douglas.<sup>108</sup> On June 1, he told Charles L. Wilson that Greeley “would be rather pleased to see Douglas re-elected over me or any other republican; and yet I do not believe it is so, because of any secret arrangement with Douglas.” Rather it was “because he thinks Douglas’ superior position, reputation, experience, and ability, if you please, would more than compensate for his lack of a pure republican position, and therefore, his re-election [would] do the general cause of republicanism, more good, than would the election of any one of our better undistinguished pure republicans.” Lincoln thought Greeley “incapable of corruption, or falsehood” and speculated that Seward “feels about as Greeley does, but, not being a newspaper editor, his feeling in this respect is not much manifested.” He assured Wilson that neither he nor his friends had “been setting stakes against Gov. Seward. No combination has been made with me, or proposed to me, in relation to the next Presidential candidate.”<sup>109</sup>

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<sup>106</sup> Baker to Lincoln, Chicago, 6 September 1858, and Charles L. Wilson to Lincoln, Chicago, 3 March 1859, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>107</sup> Charles Henry Ray to O. M. Hatch, Chicago, [ca. December 1858], Hatch Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>108</sup> Charles L. Wilson to Lincoln, Chicago, 31 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>109</sup> Lincoln to Charles L. Wilson, Springfield, 1 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:457. See also Lincoln to William Kellogg, Springfield, 11 December 1859, ibid., 3:506-7.

Though he did not write to Greeley, Lincoln did so to several Illinois Republicans, promoting unity and giving advice about increasing the party's strength in the legislature, which would choose a senator early in 1859.<sup>110</sup> Perhaps at Lincoln's bidding, his friend Jesse K. Dubois urged Republicans in northern Illinois to support a moderate platform, lest they drive off potential supporters in Egypt.<sup>111</sup> Lincoln implored Wentworth's enemies in Chicago to stop criticizing the mayor. "I do not entirely appreciate what the republican papers of Chicago are so constantly saying against Long John," Lincoln told Henry C. Whitney. "I consider those papers truly devoted to the republican cause, and not unfriendly to me; but I do think that more of what they say against 'Long John' is dictated by personal malice than [they] themselves are conscious of. We can not afford to lose the services of 'Long John' and I do believe the unrelenting warfare made upon him, is injuring our cause."<sup>112</sup> Lincoln denied that former Democrats like Wentworth were more likely than former Whigs to desert the Republican party and support Douglas.<sup>113</sup> There were, after all, some notable examples of pro-Douglas Whigs, among them President Jonathan Blanchard of Knox College, Buckner S. Morris, James W. Singleton, Usher F. Linder, Anthony Thornton, T. Lyle Dickey, and Edwin B. Webb, as well as Cyrus, Ninian, and Benjamin S. Edwards.<sup>114</sup> Even Lincoln's old friend Anson

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<sup>110</sup> Lincoln to Yates, Springfield, 9 March 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, First Supplement, 28-29; Lincoln to Ozias M. Hatch, Lincoln, 24 March 1858, ibid., 29-30; Lincoln to Thomas A. Marshall, Urbana, 23 April 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:443; George W. Rives to Lincoln, Paris, Illinois, 15 and 22 May and 4 June 1858; Abraham Smith to Lincoln, Ridge Farm, Illinois, 4 June 1858; and James B. McKinley to Lincoln, West Urbana, 28 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>111</sup> William Cary to Elihu B. Washburne, Galena, 16 May 1858, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>112</sup> Lincoln to Whitney, Springfield, 18 December 1857, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:428-29.

<sup>113</sup> Lincoln to Stephen A. Hurlbut, Springfield, 1 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:456.

<sup>114</sup> Alton correspondence, 16 October, Illinois State Register (Springfield), 18 October 1858; T. Lyle Dickey to B. S. Edwards, n.d., Illinois State Register (Springfield), 11 August 1858; Arthur C. Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 1848-1870 (vol. 3 of The Centennial History of Illinois, ed. Clarence Walworth

G. Henry supported the Little Giant, and John Todd Stuart declared that he sided with Douglas on the slavery issue, though out of friendship for his former partner he would neither campaign for the senator nor vote for legislators in November.<sup>115</sup> In February, Simeon Francis wrote Douglas a fan letter.<sup>116</sup>

Lincoln's modest efforts to promote his own candidacy disappointed Norman B. Judd, chairman of the state Republican party, who said on April 19: "If Lincoln expects to be Senator he must make a personal canvass for it in the center of the State. So I advised him two months ago – but I do not hear of any fruits."<sup>117</sup> (In fact, some northern Illinois Republicans argued that since Trumbull of Belleville was already in the senate, it would be fitting if a northerner like W. B. Ogden or Elihu B. Washburne rather than Lincoln should be the party's candidate to replace Douglas.)<sup>118</sup> When asked by Boone County Republicans if he wanted a formal endorsement for senator, Lincoln declined: "I suppose it is hardly necessary that any expression of preference for U.S. Senator, should be given at the county, or other local conventions and meetings. When the Republicans of the whole State get together at the State convention, the thing will then be thought of, and something will or will not be done, according as the united judgment may dictate."<sup>119</sup>

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Alvord; Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1919), 177-78; J. Blanchard to Douglas, Galesburg, Illinois, 1 May 1858, and N. W. Edwards to Douglas, Cairo, Illinois, 5 March 1858, Stephen A. Douglas Papers, University of Chicago; Sydney Spring to Lincoln, Grayville, 8 September 1858, and C. D. Hay to Lincoln, Burnt Prairie, Illinois, 27 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; C. D. Hay to Lyman Trumbull, Burnt Prairie, Illinois, 10 July 1857, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>115</sup> Anson G. Henry to Stephen A. Douglas, Portland, Oregon Territory, 6 February and 2 June 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago; Springfield correspondence, 8 October, Missouri Republican (St. Louis), 10 October 1858. Henry had become a Democrat earlier, supporting Buchanan in 1856.

<sup>116</sup> Simeon Francis to Douglas, Springfield, 23 February 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

<sup>117</sup> Judd to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 19 April 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>118</sup> Jason Marsh to E. B. Washburne, Rockford, 28 April 1858, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>119</sup> Stephen A. Hurlbut to Lincoln, Belvidere, 29 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Lincoln to Hurlbut, Springfield, 1 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:456.

Two days later, fear that Douglas might seduce Illinois Republicans was allayed at the Democratic state convention in Springfield, where delegates endorsed the party's 1856 platform calling for popular sovereignty, berated Republicans harshly, and failed to denounce the Buchanan administration for supporting the Lecompton Constitution and for dismissing pro-Douglas government employees.<sup>120</sup> These acts alienated antislavery men who could conceivably have supported the Little Giant.<sup>121</sup> The Republicans rejoiced at the “hard blows, and withering strokes” that the pro-Buchanan and pro-Douglas factions administered to one another.<sup>122</sup> “Oh what a sight!” Herndon exclaimed. “Plunderers of the People now at bloody war with each other over the spoils.”<sup>123</sup> Douglas “cut his own throat with his own hands,” Herndon observed; “he cut himself loose from the Southern Democracy, and broke ground with – tore loose from, all Republican sympathy.”<sup>124</sup> The disaffected pro-administration delegates, constituting roughly one-tenth of the total and calling themselves National Democrats, bolted the convention and resolved to hold a conclave of their own in June.<sup>125</sup> Sneered at by their detractors as

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<sup>120</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 22 April 1858; James W. Sheahan, The Life of Stephen A. Douglas (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860), 391-94.

<sup>121</sup> William Kellogg to Jesse K. Dubois, Washington, 25 April 1858, Dubois Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; William B. Ogden to Douglas, New York, 12 April 1858, Stephen A. Douglas Papers, University of Chicago; Horace White, “The Senatorial Contest with Douglas in 1858,” in John Locke Scripps, Life of Abraham Lincoln, ed. Roy P. Basler and Lloyd Dunlap (1860; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1961), 126-27; Chicago Press and Tribune, 17 March 1860.

<sup>122</sup> Herndon to Charles Sumner, Springfield, 24 April 1858, Sumner Papers, Harvard University.

<sup>123</sup> Herndon to Theodore Parker, Springfield, 27 April 1858, Herndon-Parker Papers, University of Iowa.

<sup>124</sup> Herndon to Trumbull, Springfield, 24 April 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>125</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 22 April 1858.

Buchaneers and Danites, they received patronage from the administration as it removed Douglas' supporters from office.<sup>126</sup>

That evening in Springfield, Lincoln met with two dozen other leading Republicans to discuss strategy.<sup>127</sup> George T. Brown reported that everyone in attendance “felt our prospects much improved, and all hands expressed a firm determination to have nothing to do with Douglass. Considerable indignation was expressed at the conduct of [Anson] Burlingame, and the uncertain condition of some of our own Representatives deplored. (Washburne had been writing that he was puzzled to know what to do with Douglas.)” Some Republicans feared that former Democrats in their party “would not stand true to Lincoln.” Brown told the assembled leaders that he had spoken with several Democrats-turned-Republican around the state, all of whom voiced their determination “to stick by Lincoln.” Brown added that Trumbull’s election in 1855 “created a moral obligation upon us which there was no wish to evade, but every desire to fulfill. The other democrats present warmly seconded my talk, and much good feeling was created.”<sup>128</sup> Anxiety over Washburne’s reported apostasy was dissipated by state representative Cyrenius B. Denio and by Charles H. Ray, to whom the Galena congressman scoffed at rumors that he supported Douglas’s reelection. Lincoln was “much distressed” by the controversy over Washburne and assured Ray that “the whole thing had made no

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<sup>126</sup> David Edward Meerse, “James Buchanan, the Patronage, and the Northern Democratic Party, 1857-1858” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Illinois, 1969), 405-11, 536-65. The term “Danite” originally applied to a secret order of Mormons who suppressed dissent and spied on dissidents.

<sup>127</sup> Among those attending were Herndon, Norman B. Judd, Deacon Bross, Ozias M. Hatch, Charles H. Ray, Charles L. Wilson, George T. Brown, and John M. Palmer) gathered

<sup>128</sup> George T. Brown to Lyman Trumbull, Alton, 25 April 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.



impression on him” and that he knew both Wentworth and Washburne “and that knowledge was sufficient.”<sup>129</sup>

Lincoln rejoiced that the badly divided Democrats left Springfield on April 21 “in not a very encouraged state of mind,” while the Republicans with whom he had conferred “parted in high spirits. They think if we do not triumph the fault will be our own, and so I really think.”<sup>130</sup> The following day, Republicans agreed to hold their convention on June 16 at Springfield, a decision “made necessary by Douglas’ stand, as made in his convention,” Herndon explained. “Probably, had not Douglas called his convention, or had he not taken the Cincinnati platform as the groundwork of his future course, then it is likely that a kind of compromise would have taken place, but now and on his present grounds – never.”<sup>131</sup>

When accused of plotting to make common cause with the National Democrats in order to defeat Douglas, Lincoln denied it. “Of course the Republicans do not try to keep the common enemy from dividing; but, so far as I know, or believe, they will not unite with either branch of the division,” he said. He added that, “it is difficult for me to see, on what ground they could unite; but it is useless to spend words, there is simply nothing to it. It is a trick of our enemies to try to excite all sorts of suspicions and jealousies amongst us.”<sup>132</sup> The following month, he declared that “if being rather pleased to see a

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<sup>129</sup> William Cary to E. B. Washburne, Galena, 24 April 1858, and C. H. Ray to Washburne, Chicago, 2 May [1858 – misfiled 1861], Washburne Papers, Library of Congress. There may also have been a similar gathering of Republican leaders in Chicago. William H. Herndon to Theodore Parker, Springfield, 24 November 1858, Herndon-Parker Papers, University of Iowa.

<sup>130</sup> Lincoln to E. B. Washburne, Urbana, 26 April 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:444. See also E. L. Baker to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 1 May 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>131</sup> Herndon to Charles Sumner, Springfield, 24 April 1858, Sumner Papers, Harvard University.

<sup>132</sup> Samuel Wilkinson to Lincoln, Farmington, Illinois, 26 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Lincoln to Samuel Wilkinson, Springfield, 10 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:458.

division in the ranks of the democracy, and not doing anything to prevent it,” is proof of a conspiracy, then the accusation was valid. “But if it be intended to charge that there is any alliance by which there is to be any concession of principle on either side, or furnishing of the sinews, or partitions of offices, or swopping of votes, to any extent; or the doing of anything great or small, on the one side, for a consideration, express or implied, on the other, no such thing is true so far as I know or believe.”<sup>133</sup>

In fact, the Republicans, unsurprisingly, worked behind the scenes to promote discord in the Democratic ranks. Herndon freely acknowledged that “The Ill[inoi]s State Journal, and each and every Republican, is trying to create the split” between the Douglas and Buchanan forces; “we want to make it wider and deeper – hotter and more impassable. Political hatred – deep seated opposition is what is so much desired, and if we can do this between the worshipers of Buck & Dug we will effect it.”<sup>134</sup> Lincoln was kept ignorant of such machinations. Herndon reported to Trumbull that his partner “does not know the details of how we get along. I do, but he does not. That kind of thing does not suit his tastes, nor does it suit me, yet I am compelled to do it – do it because I cannot get rid of it.”<sup>135</sup> Since Herndon’s father and brother staunchly supported Buchanan, he was unusually well placed to learn the doings of the National Democrats.

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A threat to Republican unity emerged in early June when disgruntled party members schemed to defeat the renomination of Congressman Owen Lovejoy, whom the

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<sup>133</sup> Lincoln to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 23 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:471-72.

<sup>134</sup> Herndon to Trumbull, Springfield, 19 February 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>135</sup> Herndon to Trumbull, Springfield, 24 June, 8 July 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

Illinois State Register called a “notorious nigger worshipping abolitionist.”<sup>136</sup>

Spearheaded by some of Lincoln’s close friends – including David Davis, Leonard Swett, T. Lyle Dickey, and Ward Hill Lamon – the anti-Lovejoy movement attracted conservatives like Josh Whitmore, who declared: “I am not only d[amne]d mad but tired of this Nigger worshipping. If Lovejoy is to be the nominee I am ready to vote for [a] Douglass Democrat.”<sup>137</sup> Lincoln, who received appeals from abolitionists to thwart the scheme, warned Lovejoy that “Your danger has been that the democracy would wheedle some republican to run against you without a nomination, relying mainly on democratic votes. I have seen the strong men who could make the most trouble in that way, and find that they view the thing in the proper light, and will not consent to be so used.” But, he added, “they have been urgently tempted by the enemy; and I think it is still the point for you to guard most vigilantly.”<sup>138</sup> When Lovejoy’s renomination seemed inevitable, Lincoln counseled Ward Hill Lamon not to support an independent candidate, for such a move would “result in nothing but disaster all round,” assuring a Democratic victory, injuring Lincoln’s chances for a senate seat, and destroying the reputation of the bolters’ nominee.<sup>139</sup> In response to an attack on David Davis, who was accused of advising friends not to vote for Lovejoy, Lincoln wrote a pseudonymous letter to the Chicago Press and Tribune defending the judge: “Davis expects Lovejoy to be nominated, and

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<sup>136</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 29 October 1858.

<sup>137</sup> Edward Magdol, Owen Lovejoy: Abolitionist in Congress (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1967), 189-99; King, David Davis, 117-20; Ward Hill Lamon to Lincoln, Joliet, 9 June 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Josh [Whitmore] to [W. H. L. Wallace], Pontiac, 5 June [1858], Wallace-Dickey Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library. Other correspondents of Wallace expressed similar sentiments. Cf. A. Wardlaw to Wallace, Granville, 7 May, 15 June, 8 September 1858, ibid.

<sup>138</sup> Abraham Smith to Lincoln, Ridge Farm, Illinois, 31 May and 4 June 1858; Stephen G. Paddock and John H. Bryant to Lincoln, Princeton, 4 June 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Lincoln to Lovejoy, Springfield, 8 March 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:435.

<sup>139</sup> Lincoln to Lamon, Springfield, 11 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:458-59.

intends to vote for him, and has so stated without hesitation or reserve. He does not pretend to conceal his preference for another candidate . . . . I have good reason to know that on a recent occasion, he expressed his decided disapprobation of a scheme concocted by certain influential persons, to bring out a stump candidate without a nomination, for the purpose of ensuring Lovejoy's defeat."<sup>140</sup> In thanking Lincoln, Davis explained that a bolt would probably have occurred if delegates had not feared that it would harm his senatorial prospects.<sup>141</sup> When chastised for supporting an abolitionist who hurt the party's chances statewide, Lincoln replied: "It is the people, and not me, who want Lovejoy. The people have not consulted me on the subject. If I had opposed Lovejoy, I doubtless should have repelled voters from among our own friends, and gained none from Douglas' friends."<sup>142</sup> Lincoln was right about Lovejoy's popularity; in November, he won reelection by the lopsided vote of 22,373 to 14,998, a more decisive victory than he had achieved in 1856.<sup>143</sup>

One friend who was repelled by Lovejoy's nomination was T. Lyle Dickey, to whom Lincoln had been close since the 1830s.<sup>144</sup> Born and raised in Kentucky, he had been a devoted Henry Clay Whig and "had a holy fear of abolition tendencies."<sup>145</sup> In August, when Dickey announced his defection to the Democrats, Republicans were

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<sup>140</sup> King, Davis, 118-19; "A Republican" to the editor of the Chicago Press and Tribune, Bloomington 8 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, First Supplement, 31-32. Davis expressed gratitude to Lincoln for this gesture.

<sup>141</sup> "I told every one, – that it was worse than folly, to keep up the fight longer – and that it would injure you – Your friends are devoted, and I really think the fact that your election to the Senate might be hazarded by a mismove – has controlled the whole thing." Davis to Lincoln, Bloomington, 14 June 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>142</sup> Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 411.

<sup>143</sup> Magdol, Lovejoy, 218.

<sup>144</sup> T. Lyle Dickey interviewed by John G. Nicolay, Washington, 20 October 1876, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 48.

<sup>145</sup> Leonard Swett, oration on the death of Dickey, Chicago Times, 10 May 1887.

downcast.<sup>146</sup> Clifton H. Moore told Lincoln that Dickey “is to[o] good a man to loose,” but added that he “will do us less harm” as “an open enemy” than he would “in pretending to be a republican & go growling about trying to sour every body.”<sup>147</sup> In October, Dickey denounced Lincoln for abandoning Henry Clay Whiggery.<sup>148</sup> (Four years earlier Dickey had told Lincoln, “I love you and want you to be a U.S. Senator.”)<sup>149</sup>

As the date for the Republican state convention approached, Lincoln grew optimistic. “I think our prospects gradually, and steadily, grow better,” he told Washburne on May 15. “There is still some effort to make trouble out of ‘Americanism.’ If that were out of the way, for all the rest, I believe we should be ‘out of the woods.’”<sup>150</sup> Other Republicans feared that many of the 37,351 Fillmore voters might make common cause with Douglas on a “Union-saving” platform.<sup>151</sup> In addition to Know Nothingism, Lincoln worried about Douglas’s attempts to woo Republicans while simultaneously trying to play down his differences with the Buchanan administration.<sup>152</sup> In April, when the Little Giant refused to support the English bill (a Democratic compromise measure designed to heal the breach created during the fight over the Lecompton constitution),

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<sup>146</sup> Dickey’s letter to Benjamin S. Edwards expressing his support for Douglas appeared in the Chicago Times, 7 August 1858, and was excerpted in the Chicago Press and Tribune, 9 August 1858. On the machinations behind the issuance of that letter, see Henry C. Whitney to Lincoln, Chicago, 7 August 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 10 August 1858.

<sup>147</sup> Clifton H. Moore to Lincoln, Clinton, 10 August 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Similarly James B. McKinley thought it might be “best for the Republican party,” but lamented Dickey’s action because “as a personal friend of his I am sorry I love him very much as a man.” James B. McKinley to Lincoln, West Urbana, 11 August 1858, ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Dickey’s speech, 19 October, in Decatur correspondence, 20 October 1858, Illinois State Register (Springfield), 23 October 1858.

<sup>149</sup> Dickey to Lincoln, Ottawa, 19 November 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>150</sup> Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 15 May 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:447.

<sup>151</sup> James Berdan to Lyman Trumbull, Jacksonville, 2 March 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>152</sup> Johannsen, Douglas, 625-26.

Lincoln noted that many Illinois Democrats were “annoyed” and “begin to think there is a ‘negro in the fence,’ – that Douglas really wants to have a fuss with the President; – and that sticks in their throats.”<sup>153</sup> To Lincoln, Joseph Medill expressed “great alarm at the prospect North of Republicans going over to Douglas, on the idea that Douglas is going is going to assume steep free-soil ground, and furiously assail the administration on the stump when he comes home.” Lincoln inferred that there “certainly is a double game being played some how.” The pro-Buchanan Democrats were slated to hold a convention in Springfield in the second week of June. “Possibly – even probably – Douglas is temporarily deceiving the President in order to crush out the 8<sup>th</sup> of June convention here,” he mused. But, he predicted, the Little Giant’s attempt to please both factions would fail. “Unless he plays his double game more successfully than we have often seen done, he can not carry many republicans North, without at the same time losing a larger number of his old friends South.”<sup>154</sup>

To defeat Douglas’s “double game” Lincoln, who still feared that some Republicans might be duped into voting for the Little Giant, must convince his party colleagues that the senator was hardly a true believer in their principles.<sup>155</sup> Republican leaders in Washington were still urging their Illinois counterparts to back Douglas. (On

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<sup>153</sup> Lincoln to Josiah M. Lucas, Springfield, 10 May 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:445. Democratic Congressman William H. English of Indiana wrote a bill stipulating that if the voters of Kansas agreed in a popular referendum to accept a small land grant, the territory would be admitted as a state right away; if the voters rejected the land grant, the territory would have to wait till its population (ca. 30,000) reached 93,000 (the average population of a congressional district). In effect, it meant that the Lecompton Constitution would be voted on once again, and if the voters ratified it, they could enter the Union immediately with a land grant. If not, they must wait and forgo the land grant. Roy Franklin Nichols, The Disruption of American Democracy (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 170-71.

<sup>154</sup> Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 27 May 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:455. Washburne assured Lincoln that fears of Douglas’s successful wooing of antislavery men in northern Illinois were groundless, for Douglas had been striving to repair his relations with Buchanan. Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 31 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>155</sup> Norman B. Judd to Lincoln, Chicago, 1 June 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

the eve of the state convention, Lincoln received word that his friend from the Thirtieth Congress, Representative Richard W. Thompson of Indiana, and his messmate at Mrs. Sprigg's boardinghouse, journalist Nathan K. Sargent, wanted Lincoln to step aside in favor of the Little Giant.)<sup>156</sup> In private correspondence and anonymous journalism, Lincoln had for months been arguing against fusion with Douglas; on June 16, at the Republican state convention, he seized the opportunity to reiterate it in an address that would become one of his most famous utterances.

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Delegates crowded into the Hall of Representatives in Springfield, where they speedily adopted a platform similar to the one passed at the 1856 Bloomington convention (written largely by Orville H. Browning) and nominated candidates for the two state offices to be contested that fall. In the midst of their deliberations, the Chicago delegation unfurled a banner reading "Cook County for Abraham Lincoln," which elicited "shouts and hurrahs of the most vociferous character." When it was suggested that the text be amended to read: "Illinois for Abraham Lincoln," the motion was greeted with a "perfect hurricane of hurrahs." Later that day, Charles L. Wilson, editor of the Chicago Journal, unexpectedly offered a resolution which won unanimous, enthusiastic approval: "Resolved that Abraham Lincoln is the first and only choice of the Republicans of Illinois for the United States Senate, as the successor to Stephen A. Douglas."<sup>157</sup>

Wilson sought to counter efforts by Democrats who were whispering that if the

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<sup>156</sup> Josiah M. Lucas to Lincoln, Washington, 5 June 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>157</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 17 June 1858; Bloomington Pantagraph, n.d., in Ida M. Tarbell, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (2 vols.; New York: McClure, 1902), 1:305.

Republicans won the legislature, they would send John Wentworth to the senate.<sup>158</sup>

Indeed, some opponents of the Little Giant feared that Long John might “go to Springfield with influence eno[ugh] to . . . defeat Lincoln.”<sup>159</sup>

A journalist reported that “Unanimity is a weak word to express the universal and intense feeling of the convention. Lincoln! LINCOLN!! LINCOLN!!! was the cry everywhere, whenever the senatorship was alluded to. Delegates from Chicago and from Cairo, from the Wabash and the Illinois, from the north, the center, and the south, were alike fierce with enthusiasm, whenever that loved name was breathed.”<sup>160</sup> This was an extraordinary development, for customarily state parties did not endorse a candidate for senator before the election of the legislature which was empowered to fill that post. But so intensely did the Republicans of Illinois resent Horace Greeley and other Easterners who urged them to support Douglas that they had, in many counties, passed resolutions endorsing Lincoln for the senate.<sup>161</sup> The Chicago Press and Tribune declared: “We assure our eastern contemporaries who have been so sorely troubled with fear that the Republicans of Illinois could not take care of their own affairs, that this action, where not spontaneous, has been provoked by their interference, though it is the result of no

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<sup>158</sup> Fehrenbacher, Chicago Giant, 157; White, Lincoln and Douglas Debates, 17.

<sup>159</sup> J[osh] Whitmore to [W. H. L.] Wallace, Pontiac, 20 April 1858, Wallace-Dickey Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>160</sup> Bloomington Pantagraph, n.d., quoted in Tarbell, Lincoln, 1:304-5.

<sup>161</sup> Lincoln was not the first senatorial candidate to be so nominated; in 1834, Mississippi Democrats had chosen Robert J. Walker as their senatorial nominee before the legislative election. Richard P. McCormick, The Second American Party System: Party Formation in the Jacksonian Era (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966), 300n.



arrangement or concert. It is the natural and expected remonstrance against outside intermeddling.”<sup>162</sup>

That evening Lincoln addressed the delegates packed into the Hall of Representatives, where he uncharacteristically read from a manuscript. He had been working steadily on his speech for over a week, taking “a great deal of pains” in an attempt to make it accurate.<sup>163</sup> He “delivered it as if he had weighed every word,” fully aware of “the weight of the startling conclusions to which his unerring logic had led him.”<sup>164</sup> Lincoln aimed to show that Douglas’s rebellion against Buchanan, which rendered the Little Giant so attractive to many opponents of slavery, was merely superficial and that the senator and the president fundamentally agreed on basic principles and had cooperated, either by design or coincidence, in promoting the interests of the slaveholding South.

Lincoln began with a paraphrase of what he considered “the very best speech ever delivered,” Daniel Webster’s second reply to Senator Robert Y. Hayne in 1830.<sup>165</sup> “If we

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<sup>162</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 14 June 1858, copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 16 June 1858.

<sup>163</sup> \*Horace White in Herndon’s Lincoln, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2:92. “I claim not to be more free from errors than others – perhaps scarcely so much; but I was very careful not to put anything in that speech as a matter of fact, or make any inferences which did not appear to me to be true, and fully warrentable,” he stated a month after delivering it. Speech in Springfield, 17 July 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:512. On the composition of this speech, see Herndon, “Lincoln the Individual,” Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress; Herndon, “Facts Illustrative of Mr. Lincoln’s Patriotism and Statesmanship,” lecture given in Springfield, 24 January 1866, Abraham Lincoln Quarterly 3 (1944-45): 183-84.

<sup>164</sup> “The Recollections of William Pitt Kellogg,” ed. Paul M. Angle, Abraham Lincoln Quarterly 3 (1945): 325; reminiscences of Paul Selby, Chicago Tribune, 2 February 1900.

<sup>165</sup> Herndon to Weik, Springfield, 1 January 1886, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress; \*Angle, ed., Herndon’s Lincoln, 386. On Webster’s influence on Lincoln, see Carl F. Wieck, Lincoln’s Quest for Equality: The Road to Gettysburg (DeKalb : Northern Illinois University Press, 2002), 165-73. In 1861, Lincoln, in a discussion of the eloquence of Daniel Webster, Henry Clay, and John Quincy Adams, said he “thought Webster will be read forever.” Michael Burlingame and John R. Turner Ettliger, eds., Inside Lincoln’s White House: The Complete Civil War Diary of John Hay (Carbondale: University of Southern Illinois Press, 1997), 26. Lincoln once told a friend “that Webster had no grace of oratory, but talked excellent sense: but, he added: ‘I was greatly pleased with a speech which I heard him deliver in which he

could first know where we are, and whither we are tending, we could then better judge what to do, and how to do it.”<sup>166</sup> Since the introduction of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, a measure “with the avowed object, and confident promise of putting an end to slavery agitation,” that agitation “has not only, not ceased, but has constantly augmented.” Such agitation, Lincoln predicted, “will not cease, until a crisis shall have been reached, and passed.” That was inevitable, he said, because a “house divided against itself cannot stand,” as Jesus had long ago warned. “I believe this government cannot endure, permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved – I do not expect the house to fall – but I do expect it will cease to be divided. It will become all one thing, or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery, will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new – North as well as South.”

In addition to prophesying the future, Lincoln analyzed the past, arguing that a conspiracy to expand slavery nationally had been actively pursued over the past four years.<sup>167</sup> In 1854, the Kansas-Nebraska act “opened all the national territory to slavery; and was the first point gained.” The “popular sovereignty” justification for this momentous change Lincoln scornfully defined as the belief that “if any one man, choose

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said, “Politicians are not sun-flowers, they do not . . . turn to their God when he sets, the same look which they turned when he rose.”” Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 497.

<sup>166</sup> Webster had begun his famous senate speech of 26-27 January 1830 thus: “When the mariner has been tossed for many days in thick weather, and on an unknown sea, he naturally avails himself of the first pause in the storm, the earliest glance of the sun, to take his latitude, and ascertain how far the elements have driven him from his true course. Let us imitate this prudence, and, before we float farther on the waves of this debate, refer to the point from which we departed, that we may at least be able to conjecture where we now are.” Charles M. Wiltse, ed., The Papers of Daniel Webster: Speeches and Formal Writings (2 vols.; Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1986), 1:287.

<sup>167</sup> He had good reason for so arguing. See Leonard L. Richards, The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000).

to enslave another, no third man shall be allowed to object.” The election of James Buchanan in 1856 was the second point gained, for it seemingly endorsed the popular sovereignty doctrine, as did the final annual message of President Franklin Pierce in December 1856. A third point gained by the proslavery forces was the Dred Scott decision in 1857. Lincoln thought it noteworthy that when Douglas was asked if “the people of a territory can constitutionally exclude slavery from their limits,” the Little Giant had replied: “That is a question for the Supreme Court.” Equally noteworthy was Buchanan’s inaugural address calling on all Americans to abide by whatever decision the high court might reach in the case of Dred Scott. Two days later (a suspiciously short time) the justices handed down their controversial decision in that matter, ruling not only that blacks were excluded from citizenship and that Congress could not prohibit slavery from entering the territories, but in addition that “whether the holding a negro in actual slavery in a free State, makes him free, as against the holder, the United States courts will not decide, but will leave to be decided by the courts of any slave State the negro may be forced into by the master.” This last point, Lincoln said, was “made, not to be pressed immediately; but, if acquiesced in for a while, and apparently indorsed by the people at an election, then to sustain the logical conclusion that what Dred Scott’s master might lawfully do with Dred Scott, every other master may lawfully do with any other one, or one thousand slaves, in Illinois, or in any other free State.”

The behavior of Douglas, Pierce, Buchanan, and the Supreme Court (presided over by Roger B. Taney) aroused Lincoln’s suspicion. “These things look like the cautious patting and petting a spirited horse, preparatory to mounting him, when it is dreaded that he may give the rider a fall,” he said. Switching the metaphor, he continued:

“We can not absolutely know that all these exact adaptations are the result of preconcert.” Nevertheless, “when we see a lot of framed timbers, different portions of which we know have been gotten out at different times and places and by different workmen – Stephen [Douglas], Franklin [Pierce], Roger [B. Taney], and James [Buchanan], for instance – and when we see these timbers joined together, and see they exactly make the frame of a house or a mill, all the tenons and mortices exactly fitting, and all the lengths and proportions of the different pieces exactly adapted to their respective places, and not a piece too many or too few – not omitting even scaffolding – or, if a single piece be lacking, we can see the place in the frame exactly fitted and prepared to yet bring such piece in – in such a case, we find it impossible to not believe that Stephen and Franklin and Roger and James all understood one another from the beginning, and all worked upon a common plan or draft drawn up before the first lick was struck.”

Lincoln pointedly asked why the Kansas-Nebraska Act’s provision regarding the people of a state as well as of a territory “was lugged into this merely territorial law” and why the justices of the Supreme Court had failed to “declare whether or not the . . . Constitution permits a State, or the people of a State, to exclude it.” These anomalies and this recent history convinced Lincoln that “we may, ere long, see . . . another Supreme Court decision, declaring that the Constitution of the United States does not permit a state to exclude slavery from its limits.” Illinoisans “shall lie down pleasantly dreaming that the people of Missouri are on the verge of making their state free; and we shall awake to the reality, instead, that the Supreme Court has made Illinois a slave State,” Lincoln predicted, “unless the power of the present political dynasty shall be met and overthrown.”

Reaching the central point of his address, Lincoln maintained that to achieve the overthrow of the slave power, its opponents must resist the blandishments of the Douglasites. Relentlessly he argued that the Little Giant was not “the aptest instrument” to thwart the slavery expansionists; the senator and his followers wanted to give the impression that he sought to keep slavery from expanding, but in fact there was no good reason to believe them. His resistance to the Lecompton Constitution, though admirable, did not prove the point, for the quarrel with Buchanan was about a factual matter, not a matter of principle. Lincoln noted that Douglas’s supporters “remind us that he is a very great man, and that the largest of us are very small ones.” Conceding the point, Lincoln quoted from Ecclesiastes: “a living dog is better than a dead lion” and maintained that even though the Little Giant was not exactly a deceased lion, he was “a caged and toothless one.” (Democrats used this unfortunate metaphor to ridicule Lincoln throughout the campaign, comparing him to “a puppy-dog fighting a lion.”)<sup>168</sup> How, Lincoln asked, could Douglas “oppose the advances of slavery? He don’t care anything about it,” and his “avowed mission is impressing the ‘public heart’ to care nothing about it.” Nor would Douglas necessarily resist calls for reopening the African slave trade. “For years he has labored to prove it a sacred right of white men to take negro slaves into the new territories. Can he possibly show that it is less a sacred right to buy them where they can be bought cheapest? And, unquestionably they can be bought cheaper in Africa than in Virginia.”

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<sup>168</sup> Chicago Times, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 26 June 1858; Pittsfield Democrat, n.d., copied in the Quincy Daily Herald, 20 July 1858; Beardstown correspondence, 11 August 1858, Chicago Times, n.d., in Paul M. Angle, ed., Created Equal? The Complete Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 92.

On the issue most dear to Republicans – prohibiting the expansion of slavery – Lincoln insisted that Douglas obviously “is not now with us – he does not pretend to be – he does not promise to ever be.” The Republican cause “must be intrusted to, and conducted by its own undoubted friends – those whose hands are free, whose hearts are in the work – who do care for the result.” He reminded his party colleagues that though they were a combination of “strange, discordant, and even, hostile elements,” they had successfully “fought the battle through, under the constant hot fire of a disciplined, proud, and pampered enemy” who was now “wavering, dissevered and belligerent.” (Here again Lincoln borrowed from Webster’s second reply to Hayne, in which the Massachusetts orator alluded to “States dissevered, discordant, belligerent.”)<sup>169</sup> This was no time to falter. Optimistically he predicted that “sooner or later the victory is sure to come.”<sup>170</sup>

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Lincoln had worried about the nation becoming all slave as far back as 1849, when antislavery forces were trounced at the Kentucky constitutional convention. He told Joseph Gillespie that he had asked a Kentuckian why the peculiar institution enjoyed such a profound grip on a state with relatively few slave owners. The reply was revealing: “you might have any amount of land, money in your pocket or bank stock and while travelling around no body would be any the wiser but if you had a darkey trudging at your heels every body would see him & know that you owned slaves – It is the most glittering ostentatious & displaying property in the world and now says he if a young man goes courting the only inquiry is how many negroes he or she owns and not what other property they may have. The love for Slave property was swallowing up every other

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<sup>169</sup> Wiltse, Speeches of Webster, 1:347.

<sup>170</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:461-69.

mercenary passion. Its ownership betokened not only the possession of wealth but indicated the gentleman of leisure who was above and scorned labour.” According to Gillespie, “These things Mr Lincoln regarded as highly seductive to the thoughtless and giddy headed young men who looked upon work as vulgar and ungentlemanly. Mr Lincoln was really excited and said with great earnestness that this spirit ought to be met and if possible checked. That slavery was a great & crying injustice and enormous national crime and that we could not expect to escape punishment for it.” He also predicted that in a few years “we will be ready to accept the institution in Illinois and the whole country will adopt it.”<sup>171</sup>

In predicting that the nation could not remain forever half slave and half free, Lincoln had in mind editorials in a leading Richmond newspaper. He denied that he was “entitled to the enviable or unenviable distinction of having first expressed the idea. The same idea was expressed by the Richmond Enquirer in 1856.”<sup>172</sup> Lincoln was “forcibly attracted” to an editorial by George Fitzhugh appearing in that paper on May 6, 1856: “Social forms so widely differing as those of domestic slavery, and (attempted) universal liberty, cannot long co-exist in the Great Republic of Christendom. They cannot be equally adapted to the wants and interests of society. The one form or the other, must be very wrong, very ill suited, to promote the quiet, the peace, the happiness, the morality, the religion and general well-being of the community. Disunion will not allay excitement and investigation, – much less beget lasting peace. The war between the two systems rages every where; and will continue to rage till the one conquers and the other is

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<sup>171</sup> Joseph Gillespie to William Herndon, Edwardsville, 31 January 1866, in Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 183.

<sup>172</sup> Cincinnati speech, 1859, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:438-62. For a discussion of the Enquirer’s views on slavery see supra, chapter 10.

exterminated. – If with disunion, we could have ‘the [be] all and end all there,’ the inducements would be strong to attempt it.”<sup>173</sup> The Richmond paper also declared that “Two opposite and conflicting forms of society cannot, among civilized men, co-exist and endure. The one must give way and cease to exist, the other become universal. If free society be unnatural, immoral, unchristian, it must fall, and give way to a slave society – a social system old as the world, universal as man.”<sup>174</sup>

Ominous too were utterances by an Illinois newspaper, the Mattoon National Gazette, whose editor, Dumas J. Van Deren, declared in 1857: “We candidly and firmly believe today that if Illinois were a slave state, the best men of Kentucky, Virginia, Tennessee, and even states farther South, would be here as soon as they could remove their families, and the prairies of Illinois would be made to smile as a lovely garden.”<sup>175</sup> The New York Day-Book endorsed the proposition: “We have rarely seen truer or more just sentiments.” In Kansas, a leading Democrat predicted that “slavery would soon be re-established in Illinois.”<sup>176</sup> Similar expressions appeared in the Southern press, including the Jackson Mississippian: “Establish slavery in Illinois and it would give us the key to the great West. The South should not content herself with maintaining her ground; she should progress. She should expand her institutions wherever soil, climate, and

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<sup>173</sup> Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 267-68; “South Carolina and the Union,” Richmond Enquirer, 6 May 1856. On the authorship of the editorial see Harvey Wish,

George Fitzhugh: Propagandist of the Old South (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1943), 151-52. Lincoln alluded to this in his later speeches. Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:451.

<sup>174</sup> Richmond Enquirer, n.d., quoted in J. to the editor, n.d., Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 13 October 1858. In 1860, Lincoln alleged that Roger Pryor, editor of the Enquirer, made such a statement. Speech in Hartford, 5 March 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:6-7.

<sup>175</sup> Quoted in Arthur C. Cole, “Lincoln’s House Divided Speech: Did It Reflect a Doctrine of Class Struggle?” (pamphlet; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1923), 33.

<sup>176</sup> Quoted in the Chicago Tribune, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 2, 5 September 1857.



production are adapted to them.”<sup>177</sup>

For some time abolitionists had been making Lincoln’s point about the incompatibility of slavery and freedom.<sup>178</sup> In 1835, William Goodell predicted that one or the other “must prevail to the destruction of the other. The laborers at the south will be free, or the laborers at the north will lose their freedom.”<sup>179</sup> The following year, the abolitionist James G. Birney insisted that if “slavery live at the South, liberty must die at the North. There is no middle ground.”<sup>180</sup> Eleven years later, a New Hampshire Free Soiler editorialized: “Slavery or freedom must triumph” for “unless justice is a phantom and all liberty a lie they cannot live and flourish in the same land together.”<sup>181</sup>

In the fateful year 1854, several militant opponents of slavery stressed that same argument. Frederick Douglass told a Chicago audience that “liberty and slavery cannot dwell in the United States in peaceful relations.” One of them “must go to the wall. The South must either give up slavery, or the North must give up liberty. The two interests are hostile, and are irreconcilable.”<sup>182</sup> Henry Ward Beecher declared that “the two great principles must come into collision and fight till one or the other is dead. It is like a battle between a vulture and an eagle. Slavery is a vulture, of base talons and polluted beak; and liberty is . . . an eagle. They must fight till there is a declaration of victory on one side or

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<sup>177</sup> Jackson Mississippian, 20 October 1854, copied in the Alton Weekly Courier, 30 November 1854.

<sup>178</sup> Jonathan A. Glickstein, “The Chattelization of Northern Whites: An Evolving Abolitionist Warning,” American Nineteenth Century History 4 (2003): 25-58.

<sup>179</sup> Goodell, “What They Would Do If They Could,” December 1835, quoted in Glickstein, “Chattelization of Northern Whites,” 48.

<sup>180</sup> Russell B. Nye, Fettered Freedom: Civil Liberties and the Slavery Controversy, 1830-1860 (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1963), 287.

<sup>181</sup> Concord Independent Democrat, 29 April 1847, quoted in Catherine Newbold, “The Antislavery Background of the Principal State Department Appointees in the Lincoln Administration” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1962), 211.

<sup>182</sup> Speech in Chicago, 30 October, Frederick Douglass’ Paper, 24 November 1854.

the other.”<sup>183</sup> Benjamin F. Wade told the senate: “Slavery must now become general, or it must cease to be at all.”<sup>184</sup> A few weeks later, Theodore Parker, whom Lincoln admired, analyzed the political situation of the country thus: “These two Ideas [freedom and slavery] are now fairly on foot. They are hostile; they are both mutually invasive and destructive. They are in exact opposition to each other, and the nation which embodies these two is not a figure of equilibrium. As both are active forces in the minds of men, and each idea tends to become a fact . . . it follows that there must not only be strife amongst philosophical men about these antagonistic Principles and Ideas, but a strife of practical men about corresponding Facts and Measures. So the quarrel, if not otherwise ended, will pass from words to what seems more serious; and one will overcome the other.”<sup>185</sup> The New York Tribune asserted that the “permanence of the Union is predicable only upon one of two conditions, either the South must put an end to slavery, or the North must adopt it.”<sup>186</sup>

In 1857, Lincoln’s law partner predicted that there would soon be “Universal freedom for all the race, or universal despotism for white and black.”<sup>187</sup> The previous year, James S. Pike, the New York Tribune’s Washington correspondent and a radical opponent of slavery, declared that unless “the Northern and Southern civilizations can be harmonized, become positively assimilated, a long union of the two is impossible.” If the U.S. could not “agree to go back to the position of the founders of the Government, and

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<sup>183</sup> Speech of February 18 in New York, New York Tribune, 20 February 1854.

<sup>184</sup> Congressional Globe, 33<sup>rd</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> Session, Appendix, 764 (speech of 25 May 1854).

<sup>185</sup> Theodore Parker, “A Sermon on the Dangers which Threaten the Rights of Man in America, Preached at the Music Hall, on Sunday, July 2, 1854” (pamphlet; Boston: Benjamin & Mussey, 1854), 31-32. For Parker’s influence on Lincoln’s speech, see Wieck, Lincoln’s Quest for Equality, 91-123.

<sup>186</sup> New York Tribune, 1854, quoted in James Harrison Wilson, The Life of Charles A. Dana (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1907), 129-30.

<sup>187</sup> Herndon to Wendell Phillips, Springfield, 9 March 1857, Phillips Papers, Harvard University.

regard Slavery as an exceptional institution, and administer the Government in the interest of universal Freedom . . . the longer continuance of the existing Union is a political impossibility.”<sup>188</sup> (A Maine Republican told Pike, “your opinion is by no means a heretical or unusual one but is shared by nearly all of the intelligent thinkers in the country who are opposed to slavery.”)<sup>189</sup> Five months after Lincoln delivered his “House Divided” speech, a leading Republican spokesman, William Henry Seward, made the same point when he described the “collision” between North and South as “an irrepressible conflict between opposing and enduring forces, and it means that the United States must and will, sooner or later, become either entirely a slave-holding nation or entirely a free-labor nation.”<sup>190</sup>

The quotation from Jesus about “a house divided” had been used by Northerners and Southerners alike. In 1857, Daniel Webster said: “If a house be divided against itself, it will fall, and crush everybody in it.”<sup>191</sup> In 1806, a Maryland critic of slavery observed that a “house divided against itself cannot stand; neither can a government or constitution: this is coincident with the present Chief Magistrate’s [Jefferson’s] opinion in his Notes on the State of Virginia.”<sup>192</sup> In 1852, the Boston abolitionist Edmund Quincy wrote: “It was said more than eighteen hundred years ago that a house divided against

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<sup>188</sup> Washington correspondence by James Shepherd Pike, 28 May and 18 December 1856, New York Tribune, 2 June and 20 December 1856. On Pike’s Radicalism, see Robert Franklin Durden, James Shepherd Pike: Republicanism and the American Negro, 1850-1882 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1957), 14-51.

<sup>189</sup> George F. Talbot to Pike, 5 February 1857, in Durden, Pike, 28.

<sup>190</sup> Speech at Rochester, N.Y., 25 October 1858, in Frederic Bancroft, The Life of William H. Seward (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1900), 1:459.

<sup>191</sup> Writings and Speeches of Daniel Webster (18 vols.; Boston: Little, Brown, 1903), 4:244.

<sup>192</sup> John Parrish, Remarks on the Slavery of the Black People, Addressed to the Citizens of the United States, Particularly to Those Who Are in Legislative or Executive Stations in the General or State Governments, and also to Such Individuals as Hold Them in Bondage (Philadelphia: Kimber, Conrad, 1806), 9.

itself cannot stand, and the truth of the saying is written on every page of history.” Quincy predicted that slavery would either be abolished or it would “at last make a fissure that will shatter into heaps the proud structure upon the heads of those that put their trust into it.”<sup>193</sup> Theodore Parker, sermonizing about slavery, said that “There can be no national welfare without national Unity of Action. . . . Without that a nation is a ‘house divided against itself.’”<sup>194</sup> In 1850, a Southern secessionist declared that the American “system rests on ‘the broad basis of the people,’” who “are not homogenous, they do not assimilate, they are opposed in interests, at variance in opinion – they are at war, inevitable, unavoidable war . . . The cement is broken, the house is divided against itself. It must fall.”<sup>195</sup> Five years later, the American Anti-Slavery Society adopted the following resolution: “a Church or Government which accords the same rights and privileges to Slavery as to Liberty, is a house divided against itself, which cannot stand.”<sup>196</sup>

Lincoln’s other prediction – regarding a second Dred Scott decision – was not far-fetched.<sup>197</sup> The Bloomington Pantagraph had mentioned the possibility of a second Dred Scott case less than a week after the Supreme Court ruled in the first one.<sup>198</sup> Lincoln was probably alluding to Lemmon vs. the People, a case which had begun in New York in 1852 and dealt with the right of slaveholders to take their chattels with them into Free

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<sup>193</sup> Letter dated 25 March 1852, Anti-Slavery Standard, n.d., quoted in Allan Nevins, The Ordeal of the Union (2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), 2:78.

<sup>194</sup> Parker, “Sermon on the Dangers which Threaten the Rights of Man,” 27.

<sup>195</sup> Edward B. Bryan, The Rightful Remedy: Addressed to Slaveholders of the South (Charleston: Southern Rights Association, 1850), 111.

<sup>196</sup> Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, William Lloyd Garrison, 1805-1879: The Story of His Life, Told by His Children (4 vols.; New York: Century, 1885-89), 3:420.

<sup>197</sup> David Zarefsky, Lincoln, Douglas and Slavery: In the Crucible of Debate (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 85-87.

<sup>198</sup> Bloomington Pantagraph, 11 March 1857 (weekly edition).

States. In 1841, the New York legislature had overturned an earlier statute permitting slave owners to visit the Empire State accompanied by slaves for temporary sojourns. The new law stipulated that “no person imported, introduced or brought into this State” could be held in bondage. In October 1857, it was argued before the New York Supreme Court, which upheld the statute by a 5-3 vote. As the case was being considered by the state’s Court of Appeals, opponents of slavery feared that it would eventually come before the U.S. Supreme Court, where Taney and his colleagues might overrule New York’s statute and pave the way for nationalizing slavery. The case was pending in 1858 and not argued before the New York Court of Appeals until 1860.<sup>199</sup> Harriet Beecher Stowe warned that the Supreme Court could decide that case in such a way that “it may be declared lawful for slave property to be held in the northern free States. Should this come to pass, it is no more improbable that there may be, four years hence, slave depots in New York City, than it was four years ago, that the South would propose a repeal of the ‘Missouri Compromise.’”<sup>200</sup> Lyman Trumbull echoed that warning: “There is now a case pending, known as the ‘Lemmon Case,’ and when the country gets prepared to receive the decision, you will probably hear again from the Supreme Court of the United States, the doctrine announced, that under the Constitution Slavery goes into all the States of the Union.”<sup>201</sup> Theodore Parker went even further, predicting that after the court had

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<sup>199</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 24 May 1860; Don E. Fehrenbacher, The Dred Scott Case: Its Significance in American Law and Politics (New York: Oxford University Press, 1978), 444-45; Joanna D. Cowden, ‘Heaven Will Frown on Such a Cause as This’: Six Democrats who Opposed Lincoln’s War (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 2001), 133-34; George Whitney Martin, Causes and Conflicts: History of the Bar Association of New York City, 1870-1970 (New York: Fordham University Press, 1970), 24-25; Brainerd Dyer, The Public Career of William M. Evarts (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1933), 34-39.

<sup>200</sup> Stowe, “An Appeal to the Women of the Free States of America on the Present Crisis in Our Country,” New York Tribune, 20 February 1854.

<sup>201</sup> Lyman Trumbull, speech in Chicago, 7 August 1858, National Era (Washington) 2 September 1858.

issued a pro-slavery ruling in the Lemmon case, within a year or two “it must decide for the African slave trade!”<sup>202</sup> In 1858, several senators – including Henry Wilson of Massachusetts, James Harlan of Iowa, Zachariah Chandler of Michigan, and William Pitt Fessenden of Maine – had warned of a new Dred Scott decision forbidding states to outlaw slavery.<sup>203</sup> The organ of the Buchanan administration declared that Southerners had a right to take slaves into Free States.<sup>204</sup> In February 1858, the California Supreme Court had determined that the slave Archy Lee was to remain the property of his owner, who had moved to Sacramento from Mississippi in 1857.<sup>205</sup>

Many others before Lincoln had made charged that a conspiracy was afoot to nationalize slavery, among them the New York Tribune, Congressman David Wilmot, Senators Fessenden and Benjamin F. Wade, and the Independent Democrats who had issued a famous denunciation of the Kansas-Nebraska bill when it was first introduced.<sup>206</sup> Doubtless Lincoln sincerely believed his allegation.<sup>207</sup> In a draft of a speech written during this campaign, he declared: “I claim no extraordinary exemption from personal ambition. That I like preferment as well as the average of men may be admitted. But I protest I have not entered upon this hard contest solely, or even chiefly, for a mere

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<sup>202</sup> Theodore Parker to Gerrit Smith, Rome, 16 February 1860, Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Manuscript Collection, Cornell University.

<sup>203</sup> Congressional Globe, 35<sup>th</sup> Congress, 1<sup>st</sup> session, 385 (Harlan; 25 January 1858), 547 (Fessenden; 3 February 1858), 617 (Wilson; 8 February 1858), 1089 (Chandler; 12 March 1858); Paul Finkelman, An Imperfect Union: Slavery, Federalism, and Comity (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1981), 239.

<sup>204</sup> Washington Union, 17 November 1857.

<sup>205</sup> In 1857, Lee had been brought to California by his master, who was seeking to recruit his health in that state. The master became a resident of California, opening a school in Sacramento. He later maintained that he was merely a traveler, but travelers do not normally open schools in the areas they are visiting. Rudolph M. Lapp, Archy Lee: A California Fugitive Slave Case (San Francisco: Book Club of California, 1969), 3-59.

<sup>206</sup> Richards, Slave Power, 13-14.

<sup>207</sup> Zarefsky, Lincoln, Douglas, and Slavery, 87.

personal object. I clearly see, as I think, a powerful plot to make slavery universal and perpetual in this nation. The effort to carry that plot through will be persistent and long continued, extending far beyond the senatorial term for which Judge Douglas and I are just now struggling. I enter upon the contest to contribute my humble and temporary mite in opposition to that effort.” The evidence to prove a conspiracy was, he admitted, “circumstantial only,” but the “string of incontestable facts” appeared to him “inconsistent with every hypothesis, save that of the existence of a conspiracy. Judge Douglas can so explain them if any one can. From warp to woof his handiwork is everywhere woven in.”<sup>208</sup>

Unbeknownst to Lincoln, there was good evidence of collusion between Buchanan and the Supreme Court. In February 1857, only the five Southern justices favored overturning the Missouri Compromise. Worried that such a split decision might not sit well with Northerners, Buchanan urged his friend, Justice Robert C. Grier of Pennsylvania, to side with his five colleagues from below the Mason-Dixon line. Grier complied and let Buchanan know that the Court would decide the case soon after his March 4 inauguration. Buchanan, who may well have seen a draft of Chief Justice Roger B. Taney’s majority decision, prepared his inaugural address accordingly, urging the public to abide by whatever decision the court might reach.<sup>209</sup>

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The Republican press in Illinois hailed Lincoln’s speech as “able, logical, and most eloquent.”<sup>210</sup> In Vermont, the Burlington Free Press praised its “sound doctrine,

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<sup>208</sup> Fragment: Notes for Speeches, [c. 21 August 1858], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:548-49.

<sup>209</sup> Fehrenbacher, Dred Scott Case, 311-14; Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, 1:110-12.

<sup>210</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 18 June 1858.

lucid statements, clear distinctions, and apt illustrations.”<sup>211</sup> William Herndon called Lincoln’s “quite compact – nervous – eloquent” speech “the best executive expression of the ideas of political Republicanism, as at present organized, that I have seen.”<sup>212</sup> At the opposite end of the ideological spectrum, the New Orleans Delta reported that “Somebody named Lincoln, who in the eyes of his friends is an unshorn Sampson of Free-soilism, . . . made a speech in which he hit the ‘Little Giant’ some terrible blows.”<sup>213</sup> Horace Greeley’s New York Tribune ran the text of the speech, which it deemed “admirable,” “compact,” “forcible,” “concise,” “able,” and “caustic.” Lincoln, said the Tribune, “never fails to make a good speech, . . . and this is one of his best efforts.”<sup>214</sup> (In July, however, Greeley privately chided Illinois Republicans for opposing Douglas’s reelection: “You have repelled Douglas, who might have been conciliated, and attached to our own side, whatever he may now find it necessary to say, or do, and, instead of helping us in other states, you have thrown a load upon us that may probably break us down.”)<sup>215</sup> In 1860, Thurlow Weed’s newspaper said this speech “called back the Republicans to their original creed,” thus preventing a “great calamity,” namely, accepting Douglas and popular sovereignty. “This great speech . . . marked Abraham Lincoln as no ordinary man. Thoughtful men saw in its author a statesman who had the

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<sup>211</sup> Burlington Free Press, 26 June 1858, in Hanna, “Lincoln and the New England Press,” 17.

<sup>212</sup> Herndon to Theodore Parker, Springfield, 8 July 1858, Herndon-Parker Papers, University of Iowa.

<sup>213</sup> New Orleans Delta, n.d., copied in the Chicago Press and Tribune, 5 July 1858.

<sup>214</sup> New York Tribune, 24 June and 12 July 1858.

<sup>215</sup> [Greeley] to [Joseph Medill], New York, 24 July 1858, copy in Lincoln’s hand, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.



sagacity to discover the peril that awaited the Republican party if it dallied with the specious theory of Stephen A. Douglas.”<sup>216</sup>

Douglas’s supporters took heart from the “House Divided” speech, which seemed too radical for Illinois. “I had thought until recently that the Little Giant was dead in Illinois – until I saw the speech Mr Lincoln made to the Republican Convention in Springfield,” remarked a Democrat in Bloomington. “I do not believe that there is any Western State that can upon a fair canvass be brought to endorse the sentiments of that Springfield Speech. It is abolition and disunion so absolutely expressed that it should be made to burn Mr Lincoln as long as he lives.”<sup>217</sup> The Democratic press reviled the speech as an incitement to civil war and a call for abolition.<sup>218</sup>

Lincoln was probably unsurprised by such an attack on his speech; before he delivered it, his political confidants had warned that it was too extreme. He rejected their advice to tone it down.<sup>219</sup> When Samuel C. Parks suggested that he modify one passage before publishing it, Lincoln asked: “Isn’t it true?”

“Certainly it is true, but it is premature. The people are not prepared for it, and Douglas will beat us with it all over the state.”

“I think that the time has come to say it, and I will let it go as it is.”<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Albany Evening Journal, 6 June 1860.

<sup>217</sup> W. P. Boyd to John J. Crittenden, Bloomington, 17 July 1858, Crittenden Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>218</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 8 October 1858.

<sup>219</sup> Statement by John W. Bunn, n.d., in William Henry Smith, A Political History of Slavery (2 vols.; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1903), 1:258-59; \*Angle, ed., Herndon’s Lincoln, 325-26; Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 268-69; Horace White in Herndon’s Lincoln, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2:92\*; Herndon, “Facts Illustrative of Mr. Lincoln’s Patriotism and Statesmanship,” 184-85; John Armstrong, interview with William Herndon, [February 1870], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 574-75; see also ibid., 162-63, 267, 441-42.

<sup>220</sup> “Samuel C. Parks’s Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln,” ed. LeRoy H. Fischer, Lincoln Herald 68 (1966): 11-12.

After the election, some friends told Lincoln that his defeat was due to the radicalism of the speech. “Well Gentlemen,” he replied, “you may think that Speech was a mistake, but I never have believed it was, and you will see the day when you will consider it was the wisest thing I ever said.”<sup>221</sup> Lincoln told Horace White that “all of his wise friends had objected to that ‘house’ paragraph, but he thought the people were much nearer to the belief than the politicians generally supposed” and therefore “while he was willing to assume all the risks incident to the use of that phrase, he did not consider the risk great.”<sup>222</sup>

The warnings, however, seemed valid, for John Lock Scripps told Lincoln a few days after the speech that its opening lines were too “ultra” for some of his Kentucky-born friends “who want to be Republicans, but who are afraid we are not sufficiently conservative, who are also somewhat afraid of our name, but who hate ‘Locofoism’ most cordially.” Those Kentuckians interpreted the “House Divided” segment of the speech as “an implied pledge on behalf of the Republican party to make war upon the institution in the States where it now exists. They do not perceive that you refer to a moral tendency, but insist that your meaning goes to a political warfar[e] under legal forms against slavery in the States.”<sup>223</sup> In response, Lincoln insisted that his address was not an abolitionist document: “I am much mortified that any part of it should be construed so differently from any thing intended by me,” he told Scripps. “The language, ‘place it [slavery] where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in course of ultimate extinction,’ I used

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<sup>221</sup> Leonard Swett to Herndon, Chicago, 17 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 163.

<sup>222</sup> Page proofs of an undated interview with White, White Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>223</sup> John Locke Scripps to Lincoln, Chicago, 22 June 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

deliberately, not dreaming then, nor believing now, that it asserts, or intimates, any power or purpose, to interfere with slavery in the States where it exists.” Emphatically he declared that “whether the clause used by me, will bear such construction or not, I never so intended it.”<sup>224</sup> The charge of “ultraism” would dog Lincoln throughout the campaign as he tried to woo conservative Whigs.

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Another charge which might have alienated former Democrats within the Republican coalition was raised by Douglas’s organ, the Chicago Times: that Lincoln opposed supplying troops during the Mexican War.<sup>225</sup> Outrageously, that paper claimed that Lincoln swore an oath to “refuse to vote one dollar to feed, cloth[e], or minister to the wants of the sick and dying volunteers from my own State, who are suffering in Mexico. Let them die like dogs! Let them die for want of medicine! Let the fever-parched lips of my Illinois neighbors crack in painful agony – not one drop of cooling liquid shall soothe them if I can help it.”<sup>226</sup> Another leading Democratic paper, the Illinois State Register, joined in the attack, calling Lincoln an “apologist of Mexico” who “pandered to [the] greasers’ profit and advantage” and whose “tory demagogism” and “mountebank antics” provided “‘aid and comfort’ to a foreign enemy during a bloody war.”<sup>227</sup> The Freeport Bulletin derided him as “a friend of the ‘greasers.’”<sup>228</sup>

Joseph Medill warned Lincoln that “thousands of our party are old Democrats,

<sup>224</sup> Lincoln to John L. Scripps, Springfield, 23 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:471.

<sup>225</sup> The charge originally appeared in the Matoon Gazette and was swiftly taken up by the Chicago Times and later by the Illinois State Register (Springfield). Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 28 July 1858; Illinois State Register (Springfield), 16 July 1858.

<sup>226</sup> Chicago Times, 23 June 1858. The Democratic press also denounced other votes cast by Lincoln on matters relating to the Mexican War. Chicago Weekly Times, 8 July 1858.

<sup>227</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 26, 28 and 29 June 1858, 30 July 1860.

<sup>228</sup> Freeport Weekly Bulletin, 26 August 1858.

and you know their sentiments on the Mexican War supply question. It ruined [Ohio Senator Thomas] Corwin. The game of the Times is to make a personal issue . . . and not a party fight.” Lincoln received similar advice from Henry C. Whitney, who called the Times’ allegation “the most potent & dangerous weapon that can be used against you in the rural districts” and urged that Lincoln not “lose ground by inattention to these apparently trifling but really formidable matters: – the fight is one effectually between you & Douglas as if you were in the field for a popular vote.” In Egypt, Democrats reportedly exhumed “the Skeletons of all those who died on the plains of Mexico and attempted to prove by the use of Volcanic thunder – ignoring sound arguments – that they all died at the hands of Abe Lincoln.”<sup>229</sup>

Lincoln swiftly provided Medill an account of his congressional votes on Mexican War appropriations, which he had always supported, and protested that the Chicago Times, “in its’ blind rage to assail me,” had ascribed to him a vote that had been cast by another Illinois Congressman, John Henry, before Lincoln had taken his seat in the House. Scornfully he observed: “I can scarcely think any one is quite vile enough to make such a charge in such terms, without some slight belief in the truth of it.”<sup>230</sup>

Medill’s paper promptly denounced “the intense meanness which prompted the Times to falsify his position, and the intenser meanness which induces it not to retract its calumnies.”<sup>231</sup> Other Republican papers called the allegation “a blistering and cowardly misrepresentation,” a “self-evident lie,” and an example of “the kind of ammunition with

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<sup>229</sup> Medill to Lincoln, Chicago, 23 June 1858; Whitney to Lincoln, Chicago, 23 June 1858; O. R. Winters to Lincoln, Marion, 3 September 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>230</sup> Lincoln to Medill, Springfield, 25 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:473-74. For the Paris Prairie Beacon, Lincoln evidently wrote an article defending his record as a congressman. Lincoln to Robert Moseley, Springfield, 2 July 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:483.

<sup>231</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 14 July 1858.

which these Black Democrats are compelled to fight.”<sup>232</sup> To their credit, the Democratic Illinois State Register acknowledged that the Times’s charge was erroneous, and the Mattoon Gazette, which had originated the allegation, apologetically retracted it.<sup>233</sup> (Lincoln later said that that Times’ abusive tactics had “helped him amazingly.”)<sup>234</sup> This was not the last dirty trick that Douglas and his organ would play on Lincoln, for the Little Giant and his editor-friend James W. Sheahan proved to be unscrupulous opponents, willing to make false charges, garble Lincoln’s words, resort to bribery, and engage in demagoguery.

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Each candidate ran scared. A week after his nomination, Lincoln predicted that the Republican nominees for statewide office (Newton Bateman for Superintendent of Public Instruction and James Miller for State Treasurer) “will be elected without much difficulty,” but he guessed that “with the advantages they have of us, we shall be very hard run to carry the Legislature,” which would choose the next senator.<sup>235</sup> In July, Herndon reported that his partner, who meticulously calculated Republican prospects in each county, was “gloomy – rather uncertain, about his own success.”<sup>236</sup> In assessing Douglas’s strengths, Lincoln said “that he was a very strong logician; that he had very little humor or imagination, but where he had right on his side very few could make a

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<sup>232</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 25 June 1858; Alton Courier, 3 July 1858.

<sup>233</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 3 July 1858; Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 2 and 28 July 1858; Chicago Press and Tribune, n.d., copied ibid., 16 July 1858.

<sup>234</sup> Springfield correspondence, 21 June, Utica, New York, Herald, 27 June 1860, copied in the New York Tribune, 9 July 1860.

<sup>235</sup> Lincoln to Trumbull, Springfield, 23 June 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:472.

<sup>236</sup> Lincoln’s memos, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:476-81; Herndon to Trumbull, Springfield, 8 July 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress. See also Herndon to Theodore Parker, Springfield, 8 July 1858, Herndon-Parker Papers, University of Iowa.

stronger argument; that he was an exceedingly good judge of human nature, knew the people of the state thoroughly and just how to appeal to the[ir] prejudices and was a very powerful opponent, both on and off the stump.”<sup>237</sup> Douglas reciprocated the sentiment. Upon hearing of Lincoln’s nomination, he told a friend: “I shall have my hands full. He is the strong man of his party – full of wit, facts, dates – and the best stump speaker, with his droll ways and dry jokes, in the West. He is as honest as he is shrewd; and if I beat him, my victory will be hardly won.”<sup>238</sup> To his brother-in-law Julius Granger, Douglas said “that he would rather meet & canvass with any other two men in Illin[ois] than ‘Abe Lincoln.’”<sup>239</sup> The mayor of Ottawa, Joseph O. Glover, recalled Douglas confiding to him: “I am pitted against one of the most formidable men in this country . . . and I am satisfied that the result of the joint debate will be, that I shall be regarded as having been beaten by Lincoln.”<sup>240</sup> When a Democratic journalist expressed sympathy to Douglas for having such an unworthy opponent, the Little Giant replied grimly: “Wait till you hear him, and maybe I’ll be the fellow your compassion is coming to.”<sup>241</sup> (More profanely, the Little

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<sup>237</sup> Ezra Prince, “A Day and a Night with Abraham Lincoln,” unpublished essay, typescript, p. 10, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>238</sup> John W. Forney, Anecdotes of Public Men (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1881), 2:179. After the election, Douglas told Senator Henry Wilson that “I have been in Congress for sixteen years, and there is not a man in the Senate I would not rather encounter in debate” than Lincoln. Henry Wilson, History of the Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America (3 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1872), 2:577. In 1860, Douglas surprised his congressional colleagues with “the hearty & eulogistic manner in which he spoke” of Lincoln and told an Indiana Representative, “in the presence of a score” of Democrats and Republicans, “that though he often met his fellow-Senators in debate none of them had ever proved so hard a match” as Lincoln. Schuyler Colfax to Lincoln, Washington, 18 May 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>239</sup> Hawkins Taylor to Lincoln, Keokuk, Iowa, 3 October 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>240</sup> Memorandum, 6 January 1884, by John A. Jameson, “Read to and corrected by Mr Glover, 16 December 1886,” enclosed in Jameson to John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Chicago, 28 December 1886, Nicolay Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>241</sup> Frank M. Daulton, who covered the debates for the Quincy Herald, quoted in the Macon, Missouri, correspondence, 26 November, New York Sun, 27 November 1904.

Giant later said: “Of all the G—d d—d Whig rascals of Springfield Abe Lincoln is the most honest.”<sup>242</sup>

On July 9, when Douglas opened his reelection campaign with a speech in Chicago before a crowd of about 12,000, he bestowed similar compliments on Lincoln, describing him as “a kind, amiable, and intelligent gentleman, a good citizen and an honorable opponent.” In general, the tone of this address was so conciliatory that the Chicago Press and Tribune hoped “that he will conduct the canvass before him with proper regard for the decencies which he has so far repeatedly violated, and for fairness that he never observed.”<sup>243</sup> Douglas denounced Lincoln’s “House Divided” speech for advocating “boldly and clearly a war of sections, a war of the North against the South, of the free states against the slave states – a war of extermination – to be continued relentlessly until the one or the other shall be subdued.” Without meaning to be ironic, the Little Giant argued that Lincoln’s policy of “uniformity” would lead to despotism, for if people did not have the right to decide for themselves whether to allow slavery in their midst, they were no longer free. The true safeguard of liberty, Douglas asserted, was “diversity,” not “uniformity.”

Turning to the race issue, which Douglas was to emphasize heavily throughout the campaign, he attacked Lincoln’s criticism of the Dred Scott decision. In a characteristic appeal to the intense Negrophobia of Illinoisans, Douglas flatly declared: “this government was made by the white man, for the benefit of the white man, to be administered by white men, in such manner as they should determine. . . . I am opposed

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<sup>242</sup> In 1859, Douglas said this to William Dickson, a friend of Lincoln’s from Cincinnati. William Dickson, “A Leaf from the Unwritten History of the Rebellion,” draft, William Dickson Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>243</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 17 July 1858.

to negro equality. I repeat that this nation is a white people – a people composed of European descendants – a people that have established this government for themselves and their posterity, and I am in favor of preserving not only the purity of the blood, but the purity of the government from any mixture or amalgamation with inferior races. I have seen the effects of this mixture of superior and inferior races – this amalgamation of white men and Indians and negroes; we have seen it in Mexico, in Central America, in South America, and in all the Spanish-American states, and its result has been degeneration, demoralization, and degradation below the capacity for self-government. I am opposed to taking any step that recognizes the negro man or the Indian as the equal of the white man. I am opposed to giving him a voice in the administration of the government.” Among those inferior races were the Chinese, Douglas implied: “I do not acknowledge that the Cooley must necessarily be put upon an equality with the white race.” (A Cherokee protested to Douglas that his tribe and others in the West were “vastly superior, in every respect, to any portion of the Negro race” and urged the Little Giant “to draw the necessary distinction between Indians and negroes.”)<sup>244</sup> Douglas closed with a salvo against the “unholy, unnatural” alliance between the Republicans and the pro-Buchanan Democrats.<sup>245</sup>

The Chicago Press and Tribune regarded this speech as proof that Illinois Republicans had been justified in rejecting the advice of their Eastern counterparts to embrace Douglas. In his Chicago address, the senator had “avowed and re-affirmed his old and most odious doctrines – his adhesion to the dogma that a majority may enslave a

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<sup>244</sup> John R. Ridge to Douglas, Marysville, California, 19 September 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

<sup>245</sup> Douglas’s speech is in Angle, ed., Created Equal?, 12-25. The crowd estimate is from the Chicago Press and Tribune, 12 July 1858.



minority, and that Slavery goes by virtue of the Constitution wherever that Constitution goes.” If the Little Giant had acknowledged “that Freedom was a little better than Slavery for the new Territories,” he would have been applauded vigorously; as it was, many auditors “went home disappointed – many of them grieved.” That newspaper also denounced Douglas for badly misrepresenting the “House Divided” speech. Angrily it observed that “Mr. Lincoln believes that there is now a struggle, and that it will continue till a certain result is reached; but Mr. Douglas says that Mr. Lincoln calls upon the participants in the struggle to throw down the slow weapon of the ballot box and precipitate the result by the sword!” Such garbling was “childish,” a “low prevarication.” The paper condemned Douglas’s espousal of the “monstrous” doctrine that the U.S., in order to remain a free country, must contain some Slave States.<sup>246</sup>

Lincoln, who sat through Douglas’s speech, reported that the Little Giant sought “to make it appear that he is having a triumphal entry into, and march through the country; but it is all as bombastic and hollow as Napoleon’s bulletins sent back from his campaign in Russia.” A majority of the crowd, he estimated, consisted of Republicans, some of whom made “a strong call” for him to respond to Douglas, but since the hour was late, it was arranged that he would speak the following night.<sup>247</sup> The Chicago Press and Tribune reported that “the Douglas meeting was the product of three weeks hard drumming and coaxing, aided by cannon and clap-trap, fuss and feathers, and profusion of pyrotechnics and costly parade,” complete with “hired claquers” and fireworks.<sup>248</sup>

Alluding to Douglas’s cannon, Lincoln said: “There is a passage, I think, in the Book of

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<sup>246</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 21, 12 and 15 July 1858.

<sup>247</sup> Lincoln to Koerner, Springfield, 15 July 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:502. On July 12, the Chicago Press and Tribune estimated that three-fifths of the crowd were Republicans.

<sup>248</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 12 July 1858.

the Koran, which reads: ‘To him that bloweth not his own horn – to such a man it is forever decreed that . . . his horn shall not be blowe-ed!’”<sup>249</sup> (The twentieth-century labor leader John L. Lewis would famously express the same thought more pithily: “He who tooteth not his own horn, the same shall not be tooted.”)<sup>250</sup> Republicans throughout Illinois shared Lincoln’s scorn for his opponent’s triumphal style, with its elaborate processions, brass bands, flag-bedecked trains, militia escorts, booming artillery, banner-festooned bandwagons, and gaudy pageantry.<sup>251</sup>

The next day, before an audience almost as large as Douglas’s (and, according to Lincoln, five times as enthusiastic), the challenger responded to the Little Giant in a speech that seemed to a Democratic journalist “a talk” with “no attempt at oratory.”<sup>252</sup> With gentle mockery he dismissed the charge of Republican collusion with the Buchaneers.<sup>253</sup> More bitingly, he maintained that “popular sovereignty” had become a meaningless concept, for thanks to the Dred Scott decision, inhabitants of a territory could only vote to exclude slavery at the very final stage of territorial settlement, when a constitution was to be adopted and application for statehood was to be made to Congress.

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<sup>249</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 21 August 1858; reminiscences of Dr. Charles Henry McElfresh, Western Christian Advocate (Cincinnati), n.d., copied in the Weekly Journal (Jacksonville), 3 July 1901. McElfresh (1864-?) was the son of John Thomas McElfresh, a carpenter and contractor who lived for decades in Springfield.

<sup>250</sup> William Safire and Leonard Safir, eds., Words of Wisdom: More Good Advice (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989), 45.

<sup>251</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 21 July 1858; Gustave Koerner to Lincoln, Belleville, 17 July 1858; W. J. Usrey to Lincoln, Decatur, 19 July 1858; Lyman Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 19 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>252</sup> Lincoln to Koerner, Springfield, 15 July 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:502; reminiscences of Francis A. Eastman, Chicago Journal, 12 February 1909. A Baptist weekly reported that Lincoln’s audience was “nearly as large” as Douglas’s. Christian Times (Chicago), n.d., copied in the Chicago Journal, 15 July 1858. On July 12, the Chicago Press and Tribune estimated Lincoln’s audience at 9,000 and the degree of enthusiasm at his meeting to be “about four times as great” as it had been at Douglas’s.

<sup>253</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:484-502.

According to the Supreme Court, Lincoln noted, “if any one man chooses to take slaves into a territory, all the rest of the people have no right to keep them out.” Thus popular sovereignty was, for all intents and purposes, a dead letter, and Douglas was being hypocritical in proclaiming his devotion both to it and to the Dred Scott decision, which negated it. Lincoln asked: “how much is left of this vast matter of squatter sovereignty I should like to know?” A member of the audience answered: “It has all gone.” (Lincoln would famously return to this point in a debate the following month at Freeport.)

Douglas’s willingness to support the right of a people in a territory to frame a constitution in accord with their own wishes was nothing new, Lincoln averred, for no one had ever denied it. Sarcastically he predicted that his opponent “will claim in a little while, that he is the inventor of the idea that the people should govern themselves; that nobody ever thought of such a thing until he brought it forward.”

Should the Little Giant be credited with defeating the Lecompton Constitution? In the senate, twenty Republicans voted against it and only three Democrats; in the House, over ninety Republicans voted against it and only twenty-two Democrats. “Now who was it that did the work?” Lincoln asked rhetorically. (Douglas’s boast that he and his colleagues had won the victory reminded a Republican of three English tailors who sent a petition to Parliament beginning: “We, the men of England.”)<sup>254</sup>

Lincoln protested against Douglas’s mischaracterization of his “House Divided” speech. “I am not [a] master of language,” he confessed. “I have not a fine education; I am not capable of entering into a disquisition upon dialectics,” but he insisted that the Judge had distorted his meaning. (Two years later, Lincoln analyzed his strengths and

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<sup>254</sup> Letter by “A Republican,” Chicago, 14 July 1858, Chicago Press and Tribune, 16 July 1858. See also “Unparalleled Effrontery,” Chicago Press and Tribune, 11 October 1858.

weaknesses as an orator: “I am not much of a rouser as a public speaker. I do not and cannot put on frills and fancy touches. If there is anything that I can accomplish, it is that I can state the question and demonstrate the strength of our position by plain, logical argument.”)<sup>255</sup> Obviously, the nation had existed half slave and half free for more than eight decades, but it had done so only because people expected that the peculiar institution would ultimately die out; the Kansas-Nebraska Act had demolished that expectation. Boldly Lincoln declared, “I have always hated slavery, I think as much as any Abolitionist. . . . I have always hated it, but I have always been quiet about it until this new era of the introduction of the Nebraska Bill began. I always believed that everybody was against it, and that it was in the course of ultimate extinction.” The Constitution, he argued plausibly, was framed and adopted by men who “intended and expected the ultimate extinction” of slavery.<sup>256</sup>

In refuting Douglas’s “uniformity charge,” Lincoln stated his belief that “each individual is naturally entitled to do as he pleases with himself and the fruit of his labor, so far as it in no wise interferes with any other man’s rights.” But he drew a distinction between laws like Indiana’s statute regulating the cultivation of cranberries and laws establishing slavery; only a man who saw nothing morally wrong with human bondage could equate the two. Douglas, Lincoln charged, “looks upon all this matter of slavery as an exceedingly little thing – this matter of keeping one-sixth of the population of the whole nation in a state of oppression and tyranny unequalled in the world.” But slavery,

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<sup>255</sup> In March 1860, during a stopover at New London, Connecticut, Lincoln allegedly told this to some of the town’s Republican leaders. Percy Coe Eggleston, Lincoln in New England (New London, Connecticut: The Tudor Press, 1943), 21.

<sup>256</sup> On the antislavery nature of the Constitution, see Don E. Fehrenbacher, The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government’s Relations to Slavery (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Lincoln insisted, should not be regarded “as something on a par with the question of whether a man shall pasture his land with cattle, or plant it with tobacco.” Douglas might demur, but “there is a vast portion of the American people that do not look upon that matter [slavery] as being this very little thing.” Rather, they “look upon it as a vast moral evil.” To assert that anyone who wished to keep slavery from expanding necessarily therefore wanted to force all states to have identical laws regarding cranberries, Lincoln scornfully argued, was “nonsense.”

By insisting that the Dred Scott decision must, like all Supreme Court rulings, be supported unconditionally, Douglas was being hypocritical, Lincoln charged, for the Little Giant and his party had endorsed Andrew Jackson’s defiance of the Court’s well-known contention, made in the 1819 case of McCulloch v. Maryland, that Congress had the power to charter a national bank. Lincoln appealed to his audience to honor the Declaration of Independence, to recall what had been achieved under the blessings of liberty. He pointed out that Americans were not united by blood but rather by a devotion to the principles of the Declaration. Germans, Irish, French, and Scandinavians who had immigrated since 1783 could find no ancestors among with those who had made the Revolution, but they felt deeply attached to the United States “when they look through that old Declaration of Independence [and] they find that those old men say that ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal,’ and then they feel that that moral sentiment taught in that day evidences their relation to those men, that it is the father of all moral principle in them, and that they have a right to claim it as though they were blood of the blood, and flesh of the flesh of the men who wrote that Declaration and so they are.”

This Revolutionary-era idealism, Lincoln said, contrasted sharply with Douglas's contention that inferior races should not be allowed to enjoy the rights accorded to the superior race. That reasoning he likened to "the arguments that kings have made for enslaving the people in all ages of the world." Monarchs "always bestrode the necks of the people, not that they wanted to do it, but because the people were better off for being ridden. This is their argument, and this argument of the Judge is the same old serpent that says you work and I eat, you toil and I will enjoy the fruits of it. Turn in whatever way you will – whether it come from the mouth of a King, an excuse for enslaving the people of his country, or from the mouth of men of one race as a reason for enslaving the men of another race, it is all the same old serpent."

To understand the purpose of the Declaration, Lincoln urged his audience to bear in mind a statement by Jesus: "As your Father in Heaven is perfect, be ye also perfect." Christ, he said, "set that up as a standard," just as the Founders had done in the Declaration. "So I say in relation to the principle that all men are created equal, let it be as nearly reached as we can. If we cannot give freedom to every creature, let us do nothing that will impose slavery upon any other creature."

Lincoln pleaded with Republicans not to forget Douglas's racist demagoguery; they should recall "all the hard names that Judge Douglas has called them by – all his repeated charges of their inclination to marry them and hug negroes." Emphatically he declared: "I protest, now and forever, against that counterfeit logic which presumes that because I do not want a negro woman for a slave, I do necessarily want her for a wife. My understanding is that I need not have her for either, but as God made us separate, we can leave one another alone and do one another much good thereby. There are white men

enough to marry all the white women, and enough black men to marry all the black women, and in God's name let them be so married. The Judge regales us with the terrible enormities that take place by the mixture of races; that the inferior race bears the superior down. Why, Judge, if we do not let them get together in the Territories they won't mix there." Eloquently he concluded, "let us discard all this quibbling about this man and the other man – this race and that race and the other race being inferior, and therefore they must be placed in an inferior position . . . . Let us discard all these things, and unite as one people throughout this land, until we shall once more stand up declaring that all men are created equal."

This remarkable address, with its soaring rhetoric and heartfelt idealism, was published in the New York Times, which deemed it "an able speech;" in the New York Tribune, which lauded it as "admirable and thoroughly Republican;" in the Bangor, Maine, Courier, which praised its "plain, candid, common sense exposition of Republican doctrine."<sup>257</sup> The abolitionist Chicago Congregational Herald detected in Lincoln "a champion" who was willing to "stand by the Declaration of Independence and fight for human rights, for man as man, irrespective of country, race, creed, or other accidental circumstances."<sup>258</sup> A leading Quaker abolitionist in eastern Illinois, Abraham Smith, congratulated Lincoln: "while some republicans – good men & true – but cautious will say thou has taken too high ground – I am rejoiced by thy speeches at Springfield & Chicago[.] thou art fairly mounted on the eternal invulnerable bulwark of truth."<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> New York Tribune, 15 and 16 July 1858; New York Times, 16 July 1858; Bangor Courier, 27 July 1858, in Hanna, "Lincoln and the New England Press," 19. Excerpts were also published in the New York Evening Post, 15 July 1858.

<sup>258</sup> Elgin Gazette, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 8 October 1858.

<sup>259</sup> Abraham Smith to Lincoln, Ridge Farm, 20 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

Democrats saw in the speech only a “few sickly attempts at irony, a plentiful supply of cant, and one or two faint quibbles.”<sup>260</sup> The New York Herald referred to Lincoln as Douglas’s “nigger worshipping competitor” who espoused the “most repulsive disunion nigger equality principles and doctrines.”<sup>261</sup> A female supporter of Douglas was more favorable, though unimpressed with the speaker’s appearance. Lillian Foster described Lincoln as “tall and awkward,” with an “ungainly” manner and a face “certainly ugly.” And yet the “good humor, generosity and intellect” which beamed from that visage made “the eye love to linger there until you almost fancy him good-looking.” On the stump, Lincoln was “a man of decided talents,” “ready, humorous, argumentative,” and able to tell anecdotes “with inconceivable quaintness and effect.”<sup>262</sup>

“The war is begun,” remarked the Chicago Journal. “The first fire has been exchanged” and “the Little Giant is wounded in several vital parts. In sound, manly argument, Lincoln is too much for him.”<sup>263</sup> The Chicago Press and Tribune observed that even though it was “an unstudied and unpremeditated effort,” a product of “hurried and imperfect preparation,” Lincoln’s speech offered “a clear comprehensive and overwhelming refutation of the sophistries and charletanisms” of Douglas’s remarks the night before.<sup>264</sup> An editor of that paper told Lincoln, “Your peroration to the spirit of Liberty was capital.”<sup>265</sup>

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<sup>260</sup> Madison, Wisconsin, Argus, n.d., copied in the Chicago Weekly Times, 22 July 1858.

<sup>261</sup> The Herald ran the full text. New York Herald, 14 and 16 July 1858.

<sup>262</sup> Lillian Foster to Rushmore G. Horton, Chicago, 1 August 1858, in Lillian Foster, Way-Side Glimpses, North and South (New York: Rudd & Carleton, 1860), 221.

<sup>263</sup> Chicago Journal, 12 July 1858.

<sup>264</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 12 July 1858. For unexplained reasons, Henry C. Whitney called this speech “the poorest effort I ever heard Lincoln make.” Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 407.

<sup>265</sup> Joseph Medill to Lincoln, Chicago, 10 September 1859, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.



Douglas and other Democrats repeatedly quoted that peroration, along with the opening paragraph of the House Divided speech, to illustrate Lincoln’s radicalism on the race issue.<sup>266</sup> The Illinois State Register alleged that in his Chicago address, “Lincoln takes bold and unqualified ground with Lovejoy and ultra abolitionism. . . . Old Whigs can see in it the ‘contemptible abolitionism’ in which Mr. Lincoln desires to engulf his old whig friends.”<sup>267</sup> The Register insisted that Illinois whites “will never submit to the amalgamation theories which the black republican aspirant for senator bases upon his construction of the declaration of independence – that the negro is the white man’s equal – that he is entitled to political privileges with the white man.” Similarly, the Freeport Bulletin inferred from Lincoln’s remarks that he believed “the negro in this state ought not only to be allowed to vote, but even to be a candidate for the Senate.”<sup>268</sup> The Chicago Times, which likened the challenger to the abolitionist Theodore Parker, regarded Lincoln’s “disgusting” Chicago speech as a “vain attempt to escape from awkward positions in which he had placed himself by his Springfield address.” In it, the Times saw an appeal for slaves to rise up and kill their masters.<sup>269</sup> The Boston Courier called it “inelegant, discursive, and laborious.”<sup>270</sup>

Thanks to Douglas’s prominence, Lincoln shared the spotlight that shone on the Little Giant and thus began to emerge as a national figure. Cincinnatians told him that the campaign “is assuming national importance in the eyes of the people of all sections of the

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<sup>266</sup> Chicago Weekly Times, 29 July, 30 September 1858; Douglas’s Springfield speech, 17 July 1858, Illinois State Register (Springfield), 19 July 1858; Missouri Republican (St. Louis), 2 October 1858; Chicago Daily Times, 3, 8, 13 October 1858; Peoria Daily Democratic Union, 29 September 1858.

<sup>267</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 14 July 1858.

<sup>268</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 28 July 1858; Freeport Weekly Bulletin, 5 August 1858, Guelzo, Lincoln and Douglas, 84-85.

<sup>269</sup> Chicago Weekly Times, 15, 22, 29 July, 12 August, 30 September 1858.

<sup>270</sup> Boston Courier, n.d., quoted in the Chicago Weekly Times, 22 July 1858.

Country,” that “Thousands of eyes, outside of your own State, are turned to you,” and that “You are beginning to be looked to as the Champion of the West.”<sup>271</sup> From upstate New York, Charles Henry Ray informed Lincoln: “you are like Byron, who woke up one morning and found himself famous. In my journey here from Chicago, and even here – one of the most out-of-the-way, rural districts in the State, among a slow-going and conservative people, who are further from railroads than any man can be in Illinois – I have found hundreds of anxious enquirers burning to know all about the newly raised-up opponent of Douglas.”<sup>272</sup>

One admirer of Lincoln’s address called it “a first rate defensive speech” but urged its author “to assail & keep assailing.”<sup>273</sup> Similarly, Norman B. Judd feared that Lincoln “will allow Douglass to put him on the defensive.”<sup>274</sup>

A week later, the two candidates spoke in Springfield. The contrast between them was highlighted by their mode of transportation to the capital and by their appearance. Fashionably attired in “plantation style,” with a “ruffled shirt,” a “dark blue coat buttoned close with shiny buttons, light trousers and shiny shoes, with a wide brimmed soft hat,” Douglas “looked rather natty and well groomed in excellently fitting broadcloth and shining linen.”<sup>275</sup> Traveling in imperial fashion, the senator with his wife and a large

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<sup>271</sup> Timothy D. Lincoln to Lincoln, Cincinnati, 17 July 1858; J. H. Jordan to Lincoln, Cincinnati, 25 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. See also George Fanning Hills to Douglas, Boston, 6 September 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

<sup>272</sup> Ray to Lincoln, Norwich, N.Y., 27 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>273</sup> John Mathers to Lincoln, Jacksonville, 19 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Lincoln agreed. Lincoln to Mathers, Springfield, 20 July 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:522.

<sup>274</sup> Judd to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 16 July 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>275</sup> Reminiscences of Ingalls Carleton of Freeport, in Edwin Erle Sparks, ed., The Lincoln-Douglas Debates of 1858 (Collections of the Lincoln Presidential Library, vol. 3; Lincoln Series, vol. 1; Springfield: Lincoln Presidential Library, 1908), 207; Carl Schurz, The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz (3 vols.; New York: McClure, 1907-8), 2:94; Johannsen, Douglas, 660.

entourage rode in the private rail coach maintained by the Illinois Central.<sup>276</sup>

Accompanying it was a platform car outfitted with a small cannon called “Popular Sovereignty” which heralded the Little Giant’s approach. On that same train, Lincoln traveled alone as a regular passenger “carrying an old carpet-bag in his hand, and wearing a weather-beaten silk hat, – too large, apparently for his head, – a long, loosely fitting frock-coat, of black alpaca, and vest and trowsers of the same material,” an outfit which “gave him a ministerial look.”<sup>277</sup> Like all lawyers working for the railroad, he had a free pass. Lincoln campaigned simply, and often alone.<sup>278</sup> The Chicago Press and Tribune noted a sharp contrast between the styles of the two candidates. The Republican challenger “goes from one appointment to another without parade or ostentation. He charters no palatial cars with a bar-room and hotel aboard. He has no cannon and powder monkeys before him to announce his coming or departure.”<sup>279</sup> On a train, Jonathan Birch encountered Lincoln carrying a “cloak that he was said to have worn when he was in Congress” but with “no baggage, no secretary, no companion even.”<sup>280</sup> Occasionally Lincoln would even ride on freight trains. One day sitting in the caboose of such a train, which was shunted onto a siding while Douglas’s special train, festooned with flags and banners, whizzed by, Lincoln jocularly remarked: “Boys, the gentleman in that car evidently smelt no royalty in our carriage.”<sup>281</sup>

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<sup>276</sup> John F. Stover, History of the Illinois Central Railroad (New York: Macmillan, 1975), 90.

<sup>277</sup> Leonard Volk, “The Lincoln Life-Mask and How It Was Made,” Century Magazine 23 (December 1881): 223; Charles W. Marsh, Recollections, 1837-1910 (Chicago: Farm Implement News Company, 1910), 75.

<sup>278</sup> Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 408.

<sup>279</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 11 October 1858.

<sup>280</sup> Jonathan Birch’s statement in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 200.

<sup>281</sup> Ward Hill Lamon, Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847-1865, ed. Dorothy Lamon Teillard (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Washington: privately published, 1911), 22.

En route to the capital, Douglas stopped in Bloomington, where he once again praised Lincoln as “a kind-hearted, amiable gentleman, a right good fellow, a worthy citizen, of eminent ability as a lawyer, and, I have no doubt, sufficient ability to make a good Senator.” But he also attacked his rival as a miscegenationist. “Why, he would permit them [blacks] to marry, would he not? And if he gives them that right, I suppose he will let them marry whom they please, provided they marry their equals. If the divine law declares that the white man is the equal of the negro woman, that they are on a perfect equality, I suppose he admits the right of the negro woman to marry the white man.” He asserted that the “only hope Mr. Lincoln has of defeating me for the Senate rests in the fact that I was faithful to my principles and that he may be able in consequence of that fact to form a coalition with Lecompton men who wish to defeat me for that fidelity.”<sup>282</sup> When he finished, the crowd called for Lincoln, who refused to give a speech, saying: “This meeting was called by the friends of Judge Douglas, and it would be improper of me to address it.”<sup>283</sup> (At Bloomington several weeks later, Lincoln would reply to what leading Democrats like Adlai Stevenson called “the greatest speech Douglas ever made.”)<sup>284</sup>

In Springfield on the afternoon of July 17, Douglas repeated his Chicago speech, laying special emphasis on Lincoln’s belief that blacks were covered by the Declaration of Independence’s assertion that “all men are created equal.” To the amusement of the crowd, Douglas sneered: “He thinks that the negro is his brother. I do not think that the

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<sup>282</sup> Political Debates between Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas (Cleveland: O. S. Hubbell, 1895), 43, 55, 41.

<sup>283</sup> Bloomington Pantagraph, 17 July 1858. This pattern was repeated at the next stop, Atlanta.

<sup>284</sup> Speech of Joseph Fifer, 4 December 1935, Bloomington Pantagraph, 5 December 1935; speech of 4 September 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:85-90.

negro is any kin of mine at all.” The Declaration “was intended to allude only to the people of the United States, to men of European birth or descent, being white men, that they were created equal . . . but the signers of that paper did not intend to include the Indian or the negro in that declaration.” Warming to his task, Douglas added: “I am opposed to Indian equality. I am opposed to putting the coolies, now importing into this country, on an equality with us, or putting the Chinese or any other inferior race on an equality with us.” Lincoln would, Douglas predicted, work to eliminate the Illinois black code forbidding African-Americans to settle in the state. “When he lets down the bars and the floods shall have turned in upon us and covered our prairies thick with them till they shall be as dark and black as night in mid-day,” then “he will apply the doctrine of nigger equality. He will then allow them to vote and to hold office, and make them eligible to the State Legislature, so that they can vote for the right persons for Senators, you know, [Laughter and cheers,] make them eligible for Government offices, &c. After he shall have made them eligible to the Judgeship, he will get Cuffee elevated to the bench – he certainly would not refuse the Judge the privilege of marrying any woman that would have him. . . . If he thinks the nigger is equal to the white man by Divine law, and the human law deprives him of equality and citizenship with the white man, then does it not follow that if he had the power he would make them citizens with all the rights of citizenship on an equality with the white man?” Douglas pledged that he would never sanction such equality. “We must preserve the purity the race not only in our politics but in our domestic relations.”<sup>285</sup> (The Chicago Journal objected that “the subject of

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<sup>285</sup> Douglas’s speech at Springfield, 17 July 1858, in Angle, ed., Created Equal?, 62-65, and in the Indiana State Sentinel (Indianapolis), 22 July 1858. The word “nigger” appears in the Indiana paper, which supported Douglas, but not in the Chicago Times. This difference lends credence to the claim that Douglas regularly used “nigger” instead of “negro,” and that the Congressional Globe and his organ, the Chicago

ethnology is not a question in the current politics . . . and has nothing whatever to do with the principles for which the Republican party are contending.”)<sup>286</sup>

In response, that evening at the statehouse Lincoln renewed his attack on the popular sovereignty doctrine as “the most errant humbug that has ever been attempted on an intelligent community” and responded to Douglas’s interpretation of the Declaration of Independence. Did the senator mean to amend that document to read that all “Europeans are created equal?” What about Russians in Asia? “I expect ere long he will introduce another amendment to his definition. He is not at all particular. He is satisfied with any thing which does not endanger the nationalizing of slavery. It may draw white men down, but it must not lift negroes up. Who shall say, ‘I am the superior, and you are the inferior?’”

Lincoln acknowledged that the Declaration of Independence should not be construed literally. “I do not understand the Declaration to mean that all men were created equal in all respects,” he conceded, offering a bizarre example of one respect in which the races were unequal. Blacks, he said, “are not our equal in color.” His meaning is obscure; what is a superior color? Perhaps he was being satirical. In any event, when he repeated it, he did so with a strong qualifier: “Certainly the negro is not our equal in color – perhaps not in many other respects; still, in the right to put into his mouth the bread that his own hands have earned, he is the equal of every other man, white or black. In pointing out that more has been given you, you can not be justified in taking away the little which has been given him. All I ask for the negro is that if you do not like him, leave him alone.

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Times, sanitized his language. See Walter B. Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Michael Burlingame (1916; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 85.

<sup>286</sup> Chicago Journal, 22 July 1858.

If God gave him but little, that little let him enjoy.” Noteworthy here is Lincoln’s agnosticism about black inferiority, above and beyond the dubious category of color; the black may be inferior to the white in other respects as well, but he did not identify them. Nor did he say that God gave black people little; he insisted only that if God gave them little, they should be allowed to enjoy that little undisturbed.<sup>287</sup> This carefully hedged treatment of the racial inferiority argument differed sharply from Douglas’s unqualified racism. A Democrat objected that Lincoln’s speech – especially his query “Who shall say, ‘I am the superior, and you are the inferior?’” and his observation that blacks are “not our equal in color – perhaps not in many other respects” – belied his protestations about black inferiority: “Mr. Lincoln may not be in favor of ‘negro equality’ but he cannot follow up his declarations on this subject and land short of so odious a doctrine.”<sup>288</sup> It was a good point.

One Springfield auditor reported that Lincoln “always makes a good speech; but on this occasion he was particularly clear and forcible,” delivering an address “full of solid argument, full of caustic criticism, full of pointed illustrations.”<sup>289</sup> The Illinois State Journal declared that “Lincoln never made a more telling speech,” which it deemed “a noble effort, worthy of any statesman” and “a most masterly answer to all the quirks, quibbles, sophistries, misrepresentations and falsehoods of Mr. Douglas.”<sup>290</sup> A correspondent for the Alton Courier called it “one of his most splendid efforts, and in my judgment the best speech which has yet been made.”<sup>291</sup> When urged to have one of his

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<sup>287</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:504-21.

<sup>288</sup> Unsigned, undated article “for the Register,” Illinois State Register (Springfield), 28 July 1858.

<sup>289</sup> Letter by “Sangamon,” Springfield, 19 July 1858, Chicago Press and Tribune, 20 July 1858.

<sup>290</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 19 and 20 July 1858.

<sup>291</sup> Springfield correspondence, 21 July, Alton Weekly Courier, 29 July 1858.

orations issued as a pamphlet, Lincoln chose this one, for, he said, it appeared “to be the most ‘taking’ speech I have made.”<sup>292</sup> It removed the scales from the eyes of the Louisville Journal, which remarked: “We had supposed him [Lincoln] to be an impracticable abolitionist or something near it from the representation of his views made by Douglas in his Chicago speech; but after reading the speeches of Lincoln at Chicago and Springfield, we find he has been most grossly misrepresented by Douglas.”<sup>293</sup> Another Louisville paper observed that “Lincoln is able, and does full justice to the bad cause he advocates.”<sup>294</sup>

Not all Republicans were pleased. One complained to Lincoln: “You are too easy on the Scamp! You should, you must be severer on him . . . just throw aside a little, or sufficient, of your over-abundance of ‘the milk of human kindness.’”<sup>295</sup> Horace Greeley observed that although Lincoln’s House Divided speech “was in the right key,” his “Chicago speech was bad; and I fear the new Springfield speech is worse. If he dare not stand on broad Republican ground, he cannot stand at all.” In a sour mood, the Tribune editor scolded Illinois Republicans: “You have taken your own course – don’t try to throw the blame on others– You have repelled Douglas, who might have been conciliated, and attached to our side, whatever he may now find it necessary to say, or do, and, instead of helping us in other states, you have thrown a load upon us that may probably break us down– You knew what was the almost unanimous desire of the

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<sup>292</sup> Lincoln to Gustave Koerner, Springfield, 6 August 1858, Roy P. Basler and Christian O. Basler, eds., Collected Works of Lincoln, Second Supplement (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 16; Lincoln to Daniel A. Cheever, Springfield, 11 August 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 8:415.

<sup>293</sup> Louisville Journal, 24 August 1858, copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 30 August 1858.

<sup>294</sup> Louisville Democrat, n.d., copied in the Indiana State Sentinel (Indianapolis), 8 September 1858.

<sup>295</sup> J. H. Jordan to Lincoln, Cincinnati, 25 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.



Republicans of other states; and you spurned and insulted them. Now go ahead and fight it through– You are in for it, and it does no good to make up wry faces– What I have said in the Tribune since the fight was resolved on, has been in good faith, intended to help you through– If Lincoln would fight up to the work also, you might get through – if he apologises, and retreats, and defines, he is lost, and all others go down with him— . . . You have got your Elephant– You would have him – now shoulder him! He is not so very heavy after all.”<sup>296</sup>

Democrats viewed Lincoln’s speech differently. The Springfield Register objected that in Lincoln’s “peevisish, fretful and feeble” Springfield address, “no allusion is made to the interests of the white man” and that all the “great questions” of the day “sink, in his mind, into insignificance compared with the interest of the negro.”<sup>297</sup>

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In sorting out his thoughts about race, Lincoln wrote a memorandum, probably in 1858, appealing to religious sentiment in a discussion of the alleged inferiority of blacks. “Suppose it is true,” he mused, “that the negro is inferior to the white, in the gifts of nature; is it not the exact reverse [of] justice that the white should, for that reason, take from the negro, any part of the little which has been given him? ‘Give to him that is needy’ is the christian rule of charity; but ‘Take from him that is needy’ is the rule of slavery.” For religious defenders of slavery, like the Rev. Dr. Frederick A. Ross, Lincoln had contempt. The “sum of pro-slavery theology,” Lincoln wrote, “seems to be this: ‘Slavery is not universally right, nor yet universally wrong; it is better for some people to

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<sup>296</sup> Greeley to Joseph Medill, New York, 24 July 1858, copy in Lincoln’s hand, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>297</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 22, 23 July 1858.

be slaves; and, in such cases, it is the Will of God that they be such.” Acknowledging that “there is no contending against the Will of God,” he insisted “there is some difficulty in ascertaining, and applying it, to particular cases.” Consider Dr. Ross, a Presbyterian divine who had in 1857 published a defense of slavery. Suppose “he has a slave named Sambo, and the question is ‘Is it the Will of God that Sambo shall remain a slave, or be set free?’” God “gives no audible answer to the question, and his revelation – the Bible – gives none . . . . No one thinks of asking Sambo’s opinion on it.” Ultimately, then, Dr. Ross himself must decide the question. “And while he consider[s] it, he sits in the shade, with gloves on his hands, and subsists on the bread that Sambo is earning in the burning sun. If he decides that God Wills Sambo to continue a slave, he thereby retains his own comfortable position; but if he decides that God will’s Sambo to be free, he thereby has to walk out of the shade, throw off his gloves, and delve for his own bread.” So Dr. Ross can hardly be expected to exercise “that perfect impartiality, which has ever been considered most favorable to correct decisions.” Commenting on this example, Lincoln displayed some passion. “But, slavery is good for some people!!! As a good thing, slavery is strikingly peculiar, in this, that it is the only good thing which no man ever seeks the good of, for himself. Nonsense! Wolves devouring lambs, not because it is good for their own greedy maws, but because it [is] good for the lambs!!!”<sup>298</sup>

In 1860, with equal scorn, Lincoln would denounce the proposition that slavery was “a necessity imposed upon us by the negro race.” In a letter that he decided not to send, he scathingly wrote: “That the going many thousand miles, seizing a set of savages, bringing them here, and making slaves of them, is a necessity imposed on us by them,

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<sup>298</sup> Fragment on pro-slavery theology, [1 October 1858?], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:204-5.

involves a species of logic to which my mind will scarcely assent.”<sup>299</sup>

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The two candidates focused their attention on central Illinois, where legislative races would be most hotly contested.<sup>300</sup> \$\$\$\$ As he stumped through communities along the Illinois River, Douglas occasionally lost his composure. At Beardstown on August 11, he assailed Lyman Trumbull, who four days earlier had alleged that Douglas’s opposition to the Lecompton Constitution was hypocritical.<sup>301</sup> The Little Giant reportedly “raved like a maniac,” “tore his hair,” and “shook his fists” while branding his senatorial colleague an “infamous liar” and a “miserable, craven-hearted wretch” who would “rather have both ears cut off than to use that language in my presence, where I could call him to account.” Douglas also said that while he wished “to discuss principles alone, without any indulgence in personalities,” his rival had stooped to personal attacks. He had treated Lincoln “with marked respect and kindness,” and in return, he claimed, he

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<sup>299</sup> Lincoln to Charles H. Fisher, Springfield, 27 August 1860, Basler, ed.,

Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:101. Lincoln was here replying to an imagined pro-slavery speech that might have been given by George M. Dallas, U.S. minister to Great Britain, in reply to an anti-slavery speech by Henry Peter Brougham of the House of Lords. It was composed by Sidney G. Fisher, brother of the addressee of Lincoln’s unsent letter. On October 29, Lincoln replied to Fisher, declining to enter into a discussion of the matter raised by the imaginary speech. Lincoln to C. H. Fisher, Springfield, 29 October 1860, Basler and Basler, eds., Collected Works of Lincoln, Second Supplement, 22. According to an influential Philadelphia journalist, “C. H. Fisher is our most prominent capitalist, & a gentleman of the highest social position. He belongs to a class most desirable for us to cultivate, & is now acting from principle, against the prejudices of most of his personal friends. His liberality & sympathy in our cause, & in your election particularly, have been practically illustrated. His brother Mr. Sydney Fisher, is a gentleman of very cultivated tastes & rare ability, & is ardently with us.” James E. Harvey to Lincoln, Philadelphia, 6 October 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Sidney G. Fisher strongly believed in the inferiority of blacks. Fisher to Charles Eliot Norton, Philadelphia, 30 March 1863, Norton Papers, Harvard University.

<sup>300</sup> James W. Sheahan identified LaSalle, Peoria, Madison, Macon, and Sangamon as the swing districts. Sheahan to Douglas, Chicago, 30 May 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago. Thomas L. Harris singled out Scott, Morgan, Sangamon, Macoupin, St. Claire, Randolph, Bond, Macon, Champagne, Logan, Mason, Peoria, Woodford, Marshall, Putnam, and Coles Counties as the battlefields where the election would be won or lost. Thomas L. Harris to Douglas, Springfield, 7 July 1858, *ibid.*

<sup>301</sup> Mark Krug, “Lyman Trumbull and the Real Issues in the Lincoln-Douglas Debates,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 57 (1964): 388.

had received abuse: his opponent had charged him with conspiring to nationalize slavery and then criticized him for not responding. Haughtily Douglas explained, “I did not suppose that there was a man in America so degraded in his own soul, as to believe that such a charge could be true against the Supreme Court and two Presidents.” He called the allegation “an infamous lie” and an “assault upon my private and public character.”

Analyzing his rival’s motives, the Little Giant declared that “Lincoln has been told by his abolition supporters that he made a great blunder in his speech at Springfield, that he should not have avowed the abolition doctrines as broadly, as rankly, as undisguisedly as he did, and that I was getting the advantage of him on the defense of his own issues. He is determined now to change the discussion, if possible, from the principle involved to a personal contest. I confess that I have no taste for personal contests before public audiences.” He then proceeded to ridicule Lincoln’s “exploits with broad-swords, on his trip to Missouri with Gen. Shields.” Douglas further alleged that in 1851 the Illinois legislature had passed the following resolution: “The people of each State and each Territory should be left by Congress to legislate for themselves, subject to no limitation whatever.” Two days later a Republican charged Douglas “with deliberately falsifying the record. There is no such resolution as he read, in the proceedings of 1851, nor anything resembling it.”<sup>302</sup>

On August 13 at Havana, where fist-fights broke out among the loud drunkards clogging the streets, Douglas delivered a “venomous” speech in which he called Lincoln

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<sup>302</sup> [Henry Binmore], Beardstown correspondence, 11 August, Missouri Republican (St. Louis), 16 August 1858; Beardstown correspondence, 10 August, Chicago Weekly Times, 19 August 1858; Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 17 August 1858; Chicago Press and Tribune, 18 August 1858; Beardstown correspondence by T., 11 August 1858, Chicago Press and Tribune, 16 August 1858. In speaking at Beardstown, Lincoln had with him “the session acts of 1851,” perhaps to rebut Douglas’s allegation about measures passed by the legislature that year.

“a liar, a coward, a wretch and a sneak” and Trumbull “a liar and a wretch and a vagabond.”<sup>303</sup> (Lincoln allegedly said that “all drunken men” would vote for Douglas.<sup>304</sup> The Little Giant made a countercharge during a speech at Decatur, where he “found it necessary to rebuke his drunken friends, and then meanly charged that they were Fremont abolitionists.”)<sup>305</sup> At Lewistown, Douglas continued berating Lincoln and Trumbull as “liars, sneaks, wretches, cowards, villains and pickpockets.” When asked why he used such strong language, Douglas replied “that Lincoln’s course has been such as to leave him no other line of argument.”<sup>306</sup> In Peoria on August 18, his abusive epithets for Lincoln and Trumbull – “infamous liar,” “low rascal,” “knave,” and “Billingsgate orator” – caused a pro-Douglas farmer to observe: “His temper is so rough, you could grate a nutmeg on it.”<sup>307</sup> The New York Times editorialized that Douglas’s “envenomed” rhetoric demonstrated “how absurd was the hope indulged in some quarters of uniting the Republicans with the supporters of the Little Giant.”<sup>308</sup> On August 31 at Joliet, Douglas abused Owen Lovejoy, a congressman as well as a Congregational minister, for “wearing the clerical robe and uttering vulgarity and mendacity, slandering private character, [and]

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<sup>303</sup> Havana correspondence, 13 August, Chicago Press and Tribune, 20 August 1858; Havana correspondence, 14 August, and Bath correspondence, 12 August, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 20 and 21 August 1858.

<sup>304</sup> Lacon correspondence, 19 August, Missouri Republican (St. Louis), 24 August 1858. The correspondent for the Missouri Republican was Douglas’s hireling and stenographic reporter, Henry Binmore. Binmore to Douglas, Alton, 20, 22 July 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago. On August 26, the Peoria Daily Transcript heatedly denied the story, calling it a piece of “contemptible lying” by a man “with a very mean, corrupt, bad heart.”

<sup>305</sup> Decatur State Chronicle, n.d. [ca. 12 October 1858], quoted in Otto R. Kyle, Lincoln in Decatur (New York: Vantage Press, 1957), 93.

<sup>306</sup> Lewistown correspondence, 16 August, Chicago Press and Tribune, 19 August 1858.

<sup>307</sup> Peoria Democratic Union, n.d., quoted in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 23 August 1858; Peoria correspondence, 18 August, Chicago Press and Tribune, weekly edition, 26 August 1858; Peoria correspondence, 18 August, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 23 August 1858.

<sup>308</sup> New York Times, 19 August 1858.

trading honest men.” Projecting his own flaws onto his challenger, the Little Giant said Lincoln resembled a “man who lets go of principle . . . of stern integrity, and undertakes, by the aid of schemes, tricks and dodging, to get popularity in each locality.”<sup>309</sup>

A Republican leader quipped that the Douglas campaign “is now reduced to three words – Liar, Abolitionist, Amalgamationist.”<sup>310</sup>

Douglas lost his temper later in the campaign as well. At Pontiac on September 2, he was asked if territorial legislatures could declare any slave imported into their domain free, the senator “flew into a passion and said that his interrogator only asked the question to ‘create confusion!’” and insisted that he “had answered it a Freeport.” He then “abused the gentleman who interrogated him.”<sup>311</sup> The editor of a local paper then asked: “If a person holds a slave in a Territory by virtue of the Constitution of the United States, in which there are no ‘police regulations’ enforcing his right to hold such property, and that slave goes into a free State, can he be recovered as a Fugitive Slave, under the provisions of the Fugitive Slave Law?” The questioner reported that the senator “looked at us as though he would take perfect delight in eating us up, or would derive exquisite pleasure in knocking the daylights out of us. Approaching us, with upraised hand and flashing eye, shaking his shaggy locks, and fairly trembling with rage, he answered: ‘Yes, sir; he can be recaptured under the Fugitive Slave Law!’ He then commenced a volley of billingsgate which would make a fishmonger blush, calling us an Abolitionist; that we were in the habit of going round lecturing in church basements, making abolition harangues, after the fashion of Lovejoy and other pincushion lecturers.” When another

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<sup>309</sup> Speech at Joliet, 31 August 1858, Missouri Republican (St. Louis), 10 September 1858.

<sup>310</sup> John M. Palmer, speech at Carlinville, Sycamore True Republican, 21 September 1858.

<sup>311</sup> Sycamore True Republican, 14 September 1858.

questioner asked if the Dred Scott decision did not in effect overturn all territorial statutes unfriendly to slavery, Douglas “fairly raved,” exclaimed “no gentleman would ask such a question!” and refused to take more questions.<sup>312</sup>

During a speech at Gillespie on October 16, David L. Phillips raised a question about the Little Giant’s role in amending a bill that would have allowed the people of Kansas a fair chance to vote on any proposed constitution for that territory. Douglas “lost his dignity and self-respect, abused and blackguarded Mr. P.,” calling “him a liar half a dozen times.” An observer described the senator’s behavior as “scandalous and galling in the extreme.”<sup>313</sup>

The Little Giant, whom one Republican called a “drunken demagogue,” may have been intoxicated during some of these speeches.<sup>314</sup> In 1858, he “was drinking himself to death,” according to Horace White.<sup>315</sup> (Douglas drank so heavily and smoked so much that throat and liver problems combined to kill him at the age of forty-eight.)<sup>316</sup> In a dispatch from Havana, White remarked that it would be difficult “to give an adequate idea of the littleness, meanness and foulness of Douglas’ harangue here . . . . The only solution of his extraordinary conduct given by his friends would not be creditable to a reputation for sobriety.”<sup>317</sup> Another witness said that Douglas at Havana “was very bitter;

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<sup>312</sup> Pontiac Sentinel, n.d., copied in the Sycamore True Republican, 14 September 1858.

<sup>313</sup> Letter by an unidentified correspondent, Gillespie, Illinois, 16 October 1858, Alton Courier, n.d., copied in the Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 20 October 1858.

<sup>314</sup> C. D. Hay to Lyman Trumbull, Burnt Prairie, Illinois, 10 July 1857, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>315</sup> White to Jesse W. Weik, New York, 14 December 1913, Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 382. White added: “The pen of the historian has not touched upon that fact as yet.” See also Johannsen, Douglas, 840; Seymour D. Thompson, “Lincoln and Douglas: The Great Freeport Debate,” American Law Review 39 (1905): 172-73.

<sup>316</sup> Johannsen, Douglas, 482, 871-72; Carr, Douglas, 46.

<sup>317</sup> Havana correspondence, 13 August 1858, Chicago Press and Tribune, 20 August 1858.

he shook his shaggy locks, rolled his eyes, stamped his feet, flourished his arms, pointed his fingers and gnashed his teeth.”<sup>318</sup> The senator’s friends reportedly “claimed as an excuse for his language that he was intoxicated at the time.”<sup>319</sup> On September 8, Douglas was allegedly inebriated while speaking in Carlinville, where he was “jaded and blue” as well as “unshaven and unshorn.”<sup>320</sup> At Centralia on September 17, Douglas again seemed intoxicated. A journalist reported, “I have never heard him commence a harangue so entirely out of temper as on this occasion . . . . In my hearing some one asked, ‘Is he drunk,’ to which a reply was made, ‘No, he has quit drinking,’ another voice adding irreverently, ‘Yes, that’s so, I’ve seen him quit more than a dozen times to-day.’”<sup>321</sup> Another spectator noted that many in the crowd “thought that Douglas was under the influence of liquor, as a sober man would hardly talk and act as he did.”<sup>322</sup> The Little Giant’s private rail car had “several huge demijohns” of liquor.<sup>323</sup> An observer of the Quincy debate in October recalled that when Douglas arrived there in that train, he “was well loaded with booze.”<sup>324</sup> At that same town, Carl Schurz observed that Douglas’s “face seemed a little puffy, and it was said that he had been drinking hard with some boon companions.”<sup>325</sup> George B. McClellan, a pro-Douglas executive of the Illinois Central, traveled one day during the campaign with the Little Giant, to whom he had

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<sup>318</sup> Bath correspondence, 16 August, Chicago Press and Tribune, 21 August 1858.

<sup>319</sup> Thomas G. Lowry, Personal Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln (London: Privately printed, 1910), 12.

<sup>320</sup> Carlinville correspondence, 8 September, Chicago Press and Tribune, 11 September 1858.

<sup>321</sup> Centralia correspondence, 17 September, Chicago Press and Tribune, 20 September 1858.

<sup>322</sup> “Douglas at Centralia,” by “one who was there,” Chicago Press and Tribune, 21 September 1858.

<sup>323</sup> Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 410.

<sup>324</sup> D. F. Spenser to an unidentified correspondent, Ruskin, Florida, 2 August 1929, Freeport’s Lincoln (Freeport, Illinois: Lincoln-Douglas Society, 1929), 152.

<sup>325</sup> Schurz, Reminiscences, 2:94.



offered his private rail car. McClellan recalled seeing the senator “somewhat affected by the large amount of whiskey he had taken, & looking unkempt & sleepy.” Douglas had “brought with him a number of his political henchmen with whom he was up all night drinking whiskey etc.”<sup>326</sup> Alluding to the Little Giant’s fondness for alcohol, George D. Prentice of the Louisville Journal remarked that “Douglas fails to improve – perhaps from his keeping too near ‘the dipper.’”<sup>327</sup> The Quincy Whig on several occasions alluded to Douglas’s alcohol consumption, saying “there are stories of late inebrieties that might be told” and suggesting that his confinement to his house in 1860 was related to health problems caused by excessive drinking.<sup>328</sup> He was evidently drunk at the Freeport debate in late August.<sup>329</sup> Herndon reported in October that “Douglas is [as] bloated as I ever saw him: he drinks very hard indeed: his look is awful to me, when I compare him as he now looks with what he was in Feb[ruar]y 1858.”<sup>330</sup> Herndon also alleged that in 1854 Douglas was “a little ‘cocked’” when he interrupted Lincoln repeatedly during his speech at Springfield.<sup>331</sup> Two years thereafter, a spectator at a Douglas rally reported that the Little Giant “was considerably drunk and made one of the most sophistical and deceitful speeches I ever listened to.”<sup>332</sup> In 1859, a brakeman aboard an Illinois Central

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<sup>326</sup> McClellan, draft of his autobiography, McClellan’s Own Story, p. 16, McClellan Papers, Library of Congress. The published version of this story is sanitized. McClellan’s Own Story (New York: Webster, 1887), 36.

<sup>327</sup> Louisville Journal, n.d., copied in the Chicago Daily Times, 2 October 1858.

<sup>328</sup> Quincy Whig, n.d., quoted in the Quincy Herald, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 4 June 1860.

<sup>329</sup> Thompson, “Lincoln and Douglas: The Great Freeport Debate,” 173.

<sup>330</sup> Herndon to Theodore Parker, Springfield, 4 October 1858, Herndon-Parker Papers, University of Iowa.

<sup>331</sup> Herndon to Weik, Springfield, 24 September 1890, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>332</sup> Theodore Parker to John P. Hale, Galesburg, 21 October 1856, in John Weiss, Life and Correspondence of Theodore Parker (2 vols.; New York: Appleton, 1864): 2:187, and John White Chadwick, Theodore Parker, Preacher and Reformer (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1901), 331.

train observed the Little Giant consume so much whiskey that “he got in a stupor and sort of slid down between the seats.” In Chicago he had to be carried off the cars.<sup>333</sup> The Springfield photographer John G. Stewart first encountered Douglas under embarrassing circumstances as a member of a gang “who assisted in conveying the senator to bed where he was left to work off the torpor of a large and refreshing case of intoxicants.”<sup>334</sup> In 1860, while campaigning for president, the Little Giant stormed late one night into William Henry Seward’s railroad sleeping car and urged him to arise and address a crowd at Toledo. Charles Francis Adams, Jr., who along with his father was accompanying Seward, recorded in his diary that the Little Giant “had a bottle of whiskey with him, and, as he left the car, he stopped to take a drink; and, next morning, I was told he was plainly drunk.”<sup>335</sup> (Adams’ brother Henry called Douglas “a drunkard.”)<sup>336</sup> Others reported that Douglas was so intoxicated he required assistance to detrain.<sup>337</sup> In October 1860, while campaigning in Illinois, the senator was “according to public reports, as drunk as usual.”<sup>338</sup> In March 1861, a Washington correspondent wrote that “Douglas drinks a good deal, and has been what the boys call ‘tight’ pretty often during the past winter.”<sup>339</sup>

In 1860, an editor of the New York Herald told N. P. Banks that Douglas “drinks hard,” and the Cincinnati Commercial alleged that the senator “frequently appeals to the

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<sup>333</sup> Benjamin F. Smith, “Memories of Lincoln and Douglas,” undated typescript, William E. Barton Papers, University of Chicago; Stevens, A Reporter’s Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 31.

<sup>334</sup> Reminiscences of John G. Stewart, Bloomington, Illinois, Pantagraph, 20 November 1901.

<sup>335</sup> Charles Francis Adams, undated diary entry, quoted in Adams, Charles Francis Adams, 1835-1915: An Autobiography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 65-66.

<sup>336</sup> Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Washington, 13 February 1861, J. C. Levenson et al., eds., The Letters of Henry Adams (6 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1982-88), 1:231.

<sup>337</sup> Johannsen, Douglas, 795.

<sup>338</sup> W. H. Hanna to David Davis, Bloomington, 19 October 1860, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>339</sup> Washington correspondence, 20 March, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 22 March 1861.

brandy bottle to sustain him amid the exhausting excitements to which he is subjected. Those who know him best are impressed that he cannot live many years.” Early in his career, said the Commercial, he had “acquired habits of drinking spirituous liquors. He probably found it next to impossible to avoid those habits, and perhaps did not look upon it as dangerous.” The Little Giant was more to be pitied than censured, “as all who know the temptations that beset public men are aware, for falling into them.” The Commercial cited “illustrious examples before him, of the ruinous consequences of indulging in stimulants, to sustain overwrought brain and nerves, and flesh and blood, in the devouring excitements of contests involving the issues of political life and death.”<sup>340</sup> Lincoln agreed with this analysis, telling a student in his law office: “a large per cent of professional men abuse their stomachs by imprudence in drinking and eating, and in that way health is injured and ruined and life is shortened.”<sup>341</sup>

At Havana on August 14, Lincoln subtly referred to Douglas’s drinking habits. The day before, Lincoln said, the Little Giant had “said something about fighting, as though referring to a pugilistic encounter between him and myself.” These remarks prompted one of Douglas’s more enthusiastic supporters to remove his coat and volunteer “to take the job off Judge Douglas’s hands, and fight Lincoln himself.” But, Lincoln said, he would not accept the challenge, for fisticuffs would settle nothing. “If my fighting Judge Douglas would not prove anything,” he continued, evidently alluding to his opponent’s bibulous habits, “it would certainly prove nothing for me to fight his bottle-

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<sup>340</sup> W. O. Bartlett to N. P. Banks, Washington, 4 May 1860, Banks Papers, Library of Congress; Cincinnati Commercial, 31 May and 2 June 1860.

<sup>341</sup> Charles S. Zane, “Lincoln as I Knew Him,” Sunset 29 (October 1912), reprinted in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 14 (1921-22): 79.

holder.”<sup>342</sup> In mid-September, taking offense at his opponent’s conduct at the Charleston debate, Lincoln said “if Douglas angered him he would state ‘that he (L) did not have to have his wife along to keep him sober.’”<sup>343</sup>

In fact, the beautiful, cultivated, tactful, well-bred Mrs. Douglas (née Adele Cutts, his second wife), a grandniece of Dolley Madison, did accompany her husband, much to the consternation of Republicans, who regarded her as “a dangerous element.”<sup>344</sup> Horace White declared that he had “never seen a more queenly face and figure” and did not doubt “that this attractive presence was very helpful to Judge Douglas.”<sup>345</sup> Wherever her husband spoke, she attended receptions.<sup>346</sup> When introduced to her, one Republican editor “was at once taken captive by the bewitching charms of the lady Senator and was turned into an effusive admirer of Mr. Douglas.”<sup>347</sup>

In late September, Lincoln gallantly agreed to escort Mrs. Douglas on a train ride from Sullivan to Danville. The Little Giant’s schedule forced him to travel all night between those two towns; Lincoln was taking the same route by day. To spare her the discomfort of a nighttime journey, Lincoln offered to accompany her. When the

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<sup>342</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:541-42.

<sup>343</sup> Dillard C. Donnohue, interview with Jesse Weik, 13 February 1887, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 602.

<sup>344</sup> Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 9 and 30 September 1858, Sparks, ed., Lincoln-Douglas Debates, 573; Johannsen, Douglas, 655.

<sup>345</sup> \*White in Herndon’s Lincoln, 2:103-4. Another journalist covering that campaign remembered her as “a most lovely and a queenly apparition. Indeed, it seemed to me that I had never seen a woman more beautiful in every way. Her tall figure was perfectly proportioned, and her every movement and gesture most graceful. She presented a marked contrast, in her youthful, blooming freshness and vivacity, to her small, dark, sombre husband. She appeared to be devoted to him, and certainly helped him in his political aspirations.” Henry Villard, Memoirs of Henry Villard, Journalist and Financier: 1838-1900 (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1904), 1:92

<sup>346</sup> She apparently spent several days at Jacksonville in Morgan County, one of the key swing districts. St. Louis correspondence, 29 September, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 30 September 1858.

<sup>347</sup> Thomas J. McCormack, ed., Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896 (2 vols.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1909), 2:66. The editor was Charles L. Bernays.

challenger arrived in Danville, he “firmly, yet kindly” told the Republican welcoming committee that he “had a lady in care whom he must first put in the hands of her waiting friends.” He then took her to a cab and wished her a good evening. She later remarked that “Mr. Lincoln was a very agreeable and considerate escort.”<sup>348</sup> Unlike Mrs. Douglas, during the campaign Mary Lincoln stayed in Springfield, where she looked after her three sons. She was present at only the last of the seven debates.

In late July and early August, Lincoln attended some of his rival’s afternoon speeches, to which he responded in the evening. On July 27 at Clinton, Douglas finally took notice of Lincoln’s conspiracy charge, which he brushed off as so preposterous that no Illinoisan “was so degraded in his soul as to believe,” an allegation “unfounded and untrue from the beginning to the end of it.” He added: “I never exchanged a word with Chief Justice Taney or any other member of the Supreme Court about the Dred Scott decision in my life, either before or after it was rendered. I never exchanged a word with President Pierce on the subject . . . nor did I exchange a word with President Buchanan upon it until long after it was made.” Menacingly he warned that if Lincoln “resorts to this game after this explanation, he will get my answer in monosyllables.”<sup>349</sup> When Douglas “said that no man could look him in the face and say that he ever denounced the U.S. Bank decision” of the Supreme Court, “Lincoln rose up and looked Douglas directly in the eye.” The Little Giant averted his gaze.<sup>350</sup> At the close of Douglas’s “powerful and denunciatory” speech, Lincoln “arose pale and trembling evidently wrought up to the

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<sup>348</sup> Hiram W. Beckwith, “Lincoln: Personal Recollections of Him, His Contemporaries and Law Practice in Eastern Illinois,” Chicago Tribune, 29 December 1895.

<sup>349</sup> Clinton correspondence, 27 July, Chicago Weekly Times, 5 August 1858; Clinton correspondence, 27 July, Illinois State Register (Springfield), 30 July 1858; Our Constitution (Urbana), 7 August 1858; Carthage Republican, 5 August 1858.

<sup>350</sup> Springfield correspondence, 2 August, Chicago Press and Tribune, 4 August 1858.

highest pitch” and announced that he would reply in the evening at the courthouse. There at candle light before a small crowd he seemed “very much depressed, still smarting under the fierceness of the assault Douglas had made upon him.” When a large contingent appeared and filled the room to overflowing, he “began to cheer up and finally warmed himself into a very successful oratorical effort,” during which he sarcastically made “a withering allusion to the angelic temper, which Douglas had displayed in his speech,” denied charges that he had voted against supplying U.S. troops in Mexico, reiterated arguments he had made at Springfield and Chicago, and in response to the Little Giant’s assertion that he had never criticized the Supreme Court’s ruling in the U.S. Bank case, insisted that he had heard Douglas do so “as many as twenty times himself, and a thousand men all over the State would back him in this, both Democrats and Republicans.”<sup>351</sup>

As he proceeded up the Illinois River in Douglas’s wake, speaking at Beardstown, Havana, Bath, Lewistown, and Peoria, Lincoln was “in excellent spirits.” Many old Whig friends accompanied him, “and the journey was filled up with politics and story-telling,” much to the delight of his traveling companions, who laughed heartily at his stories. When Horace White asked why in his speeches “he did not oftener turn the laugh on Douglas,” Lincoln “replied that he was too much in earnest, and that it was doubtful whether turning the laugh on anybody really gained any votes.”<sup>352</sup> On the eve of the August 21 debate at Ottawa, Lincoln was urged to abandon his solemn style of oratory

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<sup>351</sup> Henry S. Green, interviewed by John G. Nicolay, Springfield, July 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 32-33; speech at Clinton, 27 July 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:525-27; Chicago Times, 30 July 1858, in Angle, ed., Created Equal?, 85; Springfield correspondence, 2 August, Chicago Press and Tribune, 4 August 1858.

<sup>352</sup> \*White in Herndon’s Lincoln, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2:101-2, 96-97.

and imitate the Ohio wit Thomas Corwin. He refused, observing that the “subject is too serious & important.”<sup>353</sup> His aim as an orator was simple: “I do not seek applause, nor to amuse the people, I want to convince them.”<sup>354</sup>

White was struck by Lincoln’s ability to say something fresh at each stop. “Many times,” the journalist recollected, “did I marvel to see him get on a platform at some out-of-the-way place and begin an entirely new speech, equal, in all respects, to any of the joint debates, and continue for two hours in a high strain of argumentative power and eloquence, without saying anything that I had heard before.” When in September he asked Lincoln about his ability to offer original remarks in almost every speech, whereas the Little Giant repeated himself over and over, Lincoln “replied that Douglas was not lacking in versatility, but that he had a theory that the popular sovereignty speech was the one to win on, and that the audiences whom he addressed would hear it only once and would never know whether he made the same speech elsewhere or not, and would never care.” Lincoln, on the other hand, “said that could not repeat to-day what he had said yesterday. The subject kept enlarging and widening in his mind as he went on, and it was much easier to make a new speech than to repeat an old one.”<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>353</sup> Ezra M. Prince to Truman H. Bartlett, Bloomington, 17 September 1907, Bartlett Papers, Boston University. The following month, when Joseph Gillespie posed a similar question, Lincoln said that “he thought the occasion was too grave & serious.” Gillespie to Herndon, Edwardsville, 31 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 181.

<sup>354</sup> Isaac N. Arnold, “Reminiscences of the Illinois-bar Forty Years Ago: Lincoln and Douglas as Orators and Lawyers, Paper Read before the Bar Association of the State of Illinois, Springfield, 7 January 1881” (pamphlet; Chicago: Fergus, 1881), 26.

<sup>355</sup> \*White in Herndon’s Lincoln, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., 2:96-97. Another Republican journalist covering the two speakers made a similar observation about Lincoln: “his speeches strike the hearer or reader as new, fresh and original. He has a full armory of weapons, and upon each combat he enters provided with new arms and prepared with new and unused artillery.” Chicago correspondence, 24 September, New York Evening Post, 27 September 1858.

Lincoln took umbrage at Douglas’s Beardstown speech in which the senator had deemed the conspiracy charge “an infamous lie.” On August 12, showing “much agitation,” the challenger said: “it would be vastly more to the point for Judge Douglas to say he did not do some of these things, did not forge some these links of overwhelming testimony, than to go vociferating about the country that possibly he may hint that somebody is a liar! [Deafening applause.] I repeat and renew, and shall continue to repeat and renew, this ‘charge’ until he denies the evidence, and then I shall so fasten it upon him that it will cling to him as long as he lives.”<sup>356</sup> A Republican journalist noted that it “would be impossible for me to give your readers an idea of the energy and vehemence with which Lincoln uttered these words. It was the most terrible indictment I ever heard. Its effect was electrical. The vast audience gave three tremendous cheers when he pronounced the concluding sentence.”<sup>357</sup> (A Democratic paper reported that Lincoln’s auditors “received his niggerisms with disgust.”)<sup>358</sup>

At Havana the following day, Lincoln arrived as Douglas was speaking; he did not proceed to the site where the Little Giant held forth, explaining to someone who suggested that he do so: “No, the Judge felt so ‘put out’ by my listening to him at Bloomington and Clinton, that I promised to let him alone for the rest of the canvass. I understand he is calling Trumbull and myself liars, and if he saw me in the crowd he might be so ashamed of himself as to omit the most vivid part of his argument.”<sup>359</sup> He spoke later that day to a crowd much smaller than Douglas’s.<sup>360</sup> The following day at

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<sup>356</sup> Lowry, Reminiscences, 12; Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:541.

<sup>357</sup> Beardstown correspondence, 11 August, Chicago Press and Tribune, 16 August 1858.

<sup>358</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 17 August 1858.

<sup>359</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, weekly edition, 26 August 1858.

<sup>360</sup> Havana correspondence, 14 August, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 20 August 1858.



Bath, a town he had laid out as a surveyor decades earlier, Lincoln turned for support to admirers of Henry Clay, who had resoundingly condemned slavery. Lincoln contrasted Clay's views with Douglas's indifference on the subject.<sup>361</sup>

On August 17 at Lewistown, where a Democratic transparency proclaimed "Lincoln declares the negro his equal," the challenger, speaking with unwonted "vehemence and force," denounced amoral neutrality on the slavery issue, remarking that the Little Giant "was the only statesman of any note or prominence in the country who had never said to friend or enemy whether he believed human slavery in the abstract to be right or wrong."<sup>362</sup> (Lincoln was right; the claim that Douglas privately opposed slavery is unconvincing.)<sup>363</sup> Also at Lewistown, Lincoln delivered an even more ringing apostrophe to the Declaration of Independence than the one he had made in Springfield a month earlier. He praised the authors and signers of that document as idealists: "In their enlightened belief, nothing stamped with the divine image and likeness was sent into the world to be trodden on, and degraded, and imbruted by its fellows. They grasped not only the whole race of man then living, but they reached forward and seized upon the farthest posterity. They erected a beacon to guide their children and their children's children, and the countless myriads who should inhabit the earth in other ages. Wise statesmen as they were, they knew the tendency of prosperity to breed tyrants, and so they established these great self-evident truths, that when in the distant future some man, some faction, some interest, should set up the doctrine that none but rich men, or none but white men, were

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<sup>361</sup> Speech at Bath, 16 August 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:543-44.

<sup>362</sup> Lewiston correspondence, 17 August 1858, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 21 August 1858; speech at Lewistown, 17 August 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:545.

<sup>363</sup> Graham A. Peck, "Was Stephen A. Douglas Antislavery?" Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 26 (2005): 1-21.

entitled to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, their posterity might look up again to the Declaration of Independence and take courage to renew the battle which their fathers began – so that truth, and justice, and mercy, and all the human and Christian virtues might not be extinguished from the land; so that no man would hereafter dare to limit and circumscribe the great principles on which the temple of liberty was being built.” With “great earnestness,” he told his audience: “if you have been taught doctrines conflicting with the great landmarks of the Declaration of Independence; if you have listened to suggestions which would take away from its grandeur, and mutilate the fair symmetry of its proportions; if you have been inclined to believe that all men are not created equal in those inalienable rights enumerated by our chart[er] of liberty, let me entreat you to come back. Return to the fountain whose waters spring close by the blood of the Revolution. Think nothing of me – take no thought for the political fate of any man whomsoever – but come back to the truths that are in the Declaration of Independence. You may do anything with me you choose, if you will but heed these sacred principles. You may not only defeat me for the Senate, but you may take me and put me to death. While pretending no indifference to earthly honors, I do claim to be actuated in this contest by something higher than an anxiety for office. I charge you to drop every paltry and insignificant thought for any man’s success. It is nothing; I am nothing; Judge Douglas is nothing. But do not destroy that immortal emblem of humanity – the Declaration of American Independence.”<sup>364</sup> Horace White reported that the “applause which followed these noble utterances rang far and wide through the pleasant village” and called this

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<sup>364</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:546-47.

peroration “truly one of the finest efforts of public speaking I ever listened to.”<sup>365</sup> A Massachusetts newspaper declared that Lincoln’s speech “ranks him at once among the foremost orators of the land.”<sup>366</sup>

Although Lincoln told a friend, “My recent experience shows that speaking at the same place the next day after D[ouglas] is the very thing – it is, in fact, a concluding speech on him,” some Republicans frowned on such a strategy.<sup>367</sup> Farmers were reluctant to neglect their chores for two consecutive days.<sup>368</sup> One of his strong supporters said that Lincoln should not allow the Little Giant to take advantage of him; Douglas persuaded friends to give him elaborate receptions and draw big crowds for a daytime speech, after which most of his auditors departed. Thus “Douglas takes the crowd & Lincoln the leavings.”<sup>369</sup> At Lewistown, Lincoln only drew about 2000 whereas Douglas had an audience of 3000 the day before.<sup>370</sup> Another example was Lincoln’s appearance at Havana on August 13. According to the Democratic press, he attracted only 659 people, compared with Douglas’s 6000 the day before.<sup>371</sup> “Lincoln’s speech was not up to his usual efforts,” one correspondent alleged. “He is evidently discouraged. His ultra

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<sup>365</sup> Lewistown correspondence, 17 August, Chicago Press and Tribune, 21 August 1858.

<sup>366</sup> Lowell, Massachusetts, Journal and Courier, 30 August 1858, Sparks, ed., Lincoln-Douglas Debates, 518.

<sup>367</sup> Lincoln to William Fithian, Bloomington, 3 September 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:84; Clinton correspondence, 27 July, Chicago Weekly Times, 5 August 1858; Heckman, Lincoln vs. Douglas, 75-76. Lincoln responded to Douglas at twenty-three of the eighty sites where the Little Giant spoke, including their seven debates. Harry E. Pratt, “The Great Debates of 1858” (pamphlet; Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1956), 9.

<sup>368</sup> [Henry Binmore], Lewistown correspondence, 16 August, Missouri Republican (St. Louis), 22 August 1858.

<sup>369</sup> W. J. Usrey to Lincoln, Decatur, 19 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>370</sup> Clinton Register, 24 August 1858.

<sup>371</sup> The Chicago Times correspondent said there were fewer than 1800 “from actual count,” while the Illinois State Register said there were only 659 in his audience. Havana correspondence, 14 August, Chicago Weekly Times, 26 August 1858; letter by R., Havana, n.d., Illinois State Register (Springfield), 19 August 1858.

negroism being found to be disgustingly unpalatable to the masses.”<sup>372</sup> Another Democratic reporter wrote that Lincoln “is all legs and arms, and his constant efforts to hide the extreme length of those members by keeping them twisted up when not in use, makes his movements very kinky and uncertain. His gestures, when speaking, are positively painful, and while listening to him we are constantly uncomfortable, because you cannot divest yourself of the idea that he is suffering from an attack brought on by an imprudent indulgence in unripe fruit.”<sup>373</sup> The Illinois State Register ran similar accounts of his meeting at Clinton on July 27.<sup>374</sup> (After that speech, Lincoln reportedly said “that he would have to make his own appointments because Douglas, under present circumstances, has the crowd, and the people will not turn out in the evening to hear him reply. He is much disappointed at his reception in Clinton,” where he only drew an audience of 250, according to a Democratic newspaper.)<sup>375</sup>

Democrats were even more critical of Lincoln’s tactics than were Republicans. The Chicago Times called Lincoln a “cringing, crawling,” “poor, desperate creature,” who could not attract an audience on his own and therefore lurked “on the outskirts of Douglas’s meetings, begging the people to come and hear him.” Such conduct, the Times declared, was “mean, sneaking and disreputable.”<sup>376</sup> Richard T. Merrick, a Chicago attorney, threatened to follow Lincoln and reply to his charges wherever he spoke.<sup>377</sup>

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<sup>372</sup> Letter by R., Havana, n.d., Illinois State Register (Springfield), 19 August 1858.

<sup>373</sup> Havana correspondence, 14 August, Chicago Weekly Times, 26 August 1858.

<sup>374</sup> Clinton correspondence, 27 July, and Monticello correspondence, 29 July, Illinois State Register (Springfield), 30 July and 2 August 1858; Lawrence Weldon in Allen Thorndike Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time (New York: North American Review, 1886), 204-6.

<sup>375</sup> Decatur correspondence, 27 and 28 July, Chicago Weekly Times, 5 August 1858.

<sup>376</sup> Chicago Times, 30 July 1858, Sparks, ed., Lincoln-Douglas Debates, 56.

<sup>377</sup> S. B. Buckner to Douglas, Chicago, 30 July 1858, Stephen A. Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

George B. McClellan thought Merrick’s proposal “an excellent one.” (McClellan praised Douglas, saying apropos of one of his debates with Lincoln: “Douglas’ speech was compact, logical & powerful – Mr. Lincoln’s disjointed, & rather a mass of anecdotes than of arguments. I did not think that there was any approach to equality in the oratorical powers of the two men.”)<sup>378</sup>

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Republicans in Illinois and elsewhere urged Lincoln to challenge the Little Giant to debate.<sup>379</sup> The New York Tribune suggested that the two candidates “speak together at some fifteen or twenty of the most important and widely accessible points throughout the State, and that the controversy will be prosecuted . . . at every county seat and considerable town. Such a conflict of principles of the gravest public consequence tends to purify the political atmosphere and ennoble the strife of parties.”<sup>380</sup> The Chicago Press and Tribune said: “Let Mr. Douglas and Mr. Lincoln agree to canvass the State together, in the usual western style.”<sup>381</sup>

In late July, when Lincoln saw the published announcement of Douglas’s appointments for the following month, he conferred with Norman B. Judd about debating the Little Giant. Judd recalled that “he asked my advice in such a way that (I knew him so well) I saw that he had already decided the question for himself. I therefore without

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<sup>378</sup> Draft of McClellan’s memoirs, quoted in Stephen W. Sears, George B. McClellan: The Young Napoleon (New York: Ticknor and Fields, 1988), 59. It cannot be determined which debate Douglas was referring to.

<sup>379</sup> J. H. Jordan to Lincoln, Cincinnati, 25 July 1858, and W. J. Usrey to Lincoln, Decatur, 19 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Monaghan, Man Who Elected Lincoln, 111-13. Allegedly, some Republican leaders tried to induce Douglas to make the offer, but he refused. Chicago Journal, 12 February 1909.

<sup>380</sup> New York Tribune 12 July 1858.

<sup>381</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 22 July 1858.

hesitation told him I thought it would be a good thing.” (According to another account, Lincoln stated: “I will give him the whole length of my knife.”)<sup>382</sup> Lincoln then wrote a challenge for Judd to deliver to Douglas, formally proposing that they “divide time, and address the same audiences.” Judd “had very hard work” locating the senator. When, after three days, he finally did catch up with him and presented Lincoln’s note, “it made him very angry – so much so that he almost insulted” him, Judd recalled. Among other “ill-tempered remarks,” the Little Giant asked: “What do you come to me with such a thing as this for?”<sup>383</sup> He berated Judd for his apostasy in abandoning the Democratic party. Ignoring the insults, Judd handed over Lincoln’s challenge, which Douglas “angrily and emphatically declined to consider on the ground that it was a childish idea and that he would be belittling himself and dignifying Lincoln.”<sup>384</sup> (Another reason for Douglas’s hesitation was his respect for Lincoln’s ability. As the senator told Joseph O. Glover, “I do not feel, between you and me, that I want to go into this debate. The whole country knows me and has me measured. Lincoln, as regards myself, is comparatively unknown, and if he gets the best of this debate, and I want to say he is the ablest man the

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<sup>382</sup> A lawyer friend of Lincoln, quoted in Truman Bartlett, “The Cooper Institute Portrait of Abraham Lincoln,” p. 24, typescript, Bartlett Papers, Boston University. See also as memo by Nicolay, citing no source, box 9, Nicolay Papers, Library of Congress. That account alleges that Lincoln met with several advisors in Springfield to discuss challenging Douglas to debate.

<sup>383</sup> Chicago Times, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 29 July 1858; Lincoln to Douglas, Chicago, 24 July 1858 Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:522; Norman B. Judd interviewed by John G. Nicolay, Washington, 28 February 1876, Burlingame, Oral History, 44-45. Judd’s reminiscences cast doubt on the tradition that Lincoln and Douglas met at a cottage in Bement to discuss the debates. On that tradition, see Jim Fay, “Lincoln & Douglas at the Bryant Cottage,” Lincoln Herald 100 (1998): 11-28.

<sup>384</sup> Judd’s son Edward, recalling a story he heard his father tell many times, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 6 February 1916.

Republicans have got, I shall lose everything and Lincoln will gain everything. Should I win, I shall gain but little.”<sup>385</sup>

Judd replied that “if Douglas refused it would then be published broadcast throughout the state, coupled with the assertion that Douglas was afraid to meet Lincoln in debate.”<sup>386</sup> Indeed, the Little Giant would have looked unmanly; the Chicago Press and Tribune noted that “it has been justly held that the candidate who refused to speak in that way [i.e., in debates] had no better reason than cowardice for declining the challenge.”<sup>387</sup> The Chicago Times asked why Lincoln had not issued the challenge earlier.<sup>388</sup> It was a reasonable question, for the underdog stands to benefit more than the favorite in political debates.

Douglas offered a counterproposal: noting that the Democratic State Central Committee had committed him to speak at party meetings throughout the state, Douglas declined to share time with Lincoln at those events, but he would agree to debate in each of the state’s nine congressional districts, except for the two where they had already in effect debated (i.e., Chicago and Springfield). In picking up the gage thus flung down, Douglas peevishly and falsely suggested that Lincoln was plotting to include a National Democratic candidate for the senate in the debates.<sup>389</sup> Forwarding this response to Lincoln, Judd observed that it “is a clear dodge, but he has made the best case he

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<sup>385</sup> Undated interview with Joseph O. Glover’s son Henry, Ida M. Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

<sup>386</sup> Judd’s son Edward, recalling a story he heard his father tell many times, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, 6 February 1916.

<sup>387</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 26 July 1858.

<sup>388</sup> Chicago Weekly Times, 5 August 1858.

<sup>389</sup> Douglas to Lincoln, Chicago, 24 July 1858, Johanssen, ed., Letters of Douglas, 423-24. It was alleged that Lincoln had secretly met with the pro-Buchanan Democrats and arranged to have their candidate for senate included in the proposed debates. Chicago correspondence, 26 July, Illinois State Register (Springfield), 30 July 1858.

could.”<sup>390</sup> On July 29, protesting against the “unjust” insinuations of “attempted unfairness,” Lincoln accepted Douglas’s terms.<sup>391</sup>

The following day Douglas submitted a schedule for the debates: Ottawa (August 21), Freeport (August 27), Jonesboro (September 15), Charleston (September 18), Galesburg (October 7), Quincy (October 13), and Alton (October 15). Each debate would last three hours, evenly divided between the two candidates, with one opening for an hour, the other replying for an hour and a half, and the first speaker concluding with a half-hour rejoinder. Douglas would have the opening and closing speeches at the first, third, fifth, and seventh debates.<sup>392</sup> Mildly protesting that this arrangement gave the Little Giant four openings and closes to his three, Lincoln accepted these conditions. He also pledged, “I shall be at no more of your exclusive meetings.”<sup>393</sup>

Republicans found Douglas’s response unimpressive. The Illinois State Journal complained that there were “about one hundred points in the State where the candidates . . . ought to have held discussions.” The Little Giant’s excuse for confining the debates to seven sites “is a cowardly showing of the white feather,” the Journal protested.<sup>394</sup> “The little dodger shirks, and backs out, except at half a dozen places which he himself selects!” exclaimed the Chicago Press and Tribune. Douglas’s reply was so “cowardly and contemptible” that the editors surmised the Little Giant “is afraid of ‘Long Abe’ on the stump” and “would rather go about the country like a strolling mountebank, with his cannon, to[a]dies and puffers, to shoot, cheer and blow for him than to stand up to the

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<sup>390</sup> Judd to Lincoln, Chicago, 27 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>391</sup> Lincoln to Douglas, Springfield, 29 July 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:528-30.

<sup>392</sup> Douglas to Lincoln, Chicago, 24 July 1858, Johannsen, ed., Letters of Douglas, 424-25.

<sup>393</sup> Lincoln to Douglas, Springfield, 31 July 1858, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:528-30.

<sup>394</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 3 August, 31 July 1858.



work with a full grown man to confront him.” In 1840, Douglas had ridiculed William Henry Harrison for placing himself in the hands of a committee; now the Little Giant was using that same excuse.<sup>395</sup> The Peoria Transcript thought Douglas’s response showed that “he fears to meet so powerful an opponent as Mr Lincoln in argument before the people.”<sup>396</sup> The senator “shows the white feather, and, like a trembling Felix skulks behind the appointments of the immaculate Democratic State Central Committee!!” exclaimed the Chicago Journal scornfully.<sup>397</sup>

The Illinois State Register demurred: “The idea that a man who has crossed blades in the senate with the strongest intellects of the country, who has, as the champion of democratic principles in the senatorial arena, routed all opposition – that such a man dreads encounter with Mr. A. Lincoln is an absurdity that can be uttered by his organs only with a ghastly phiz.”<sup>398</sup> Lincoln, the Register predicted, “will get enough of debate and discomfiture to last him the rest of his life.”<sup>399</sup>

Throughout the country, eyes turned to Ottawa, where the candidates would inaugurate what one Illinois abolitionist regarded as “no[thing] less than a contest for the advancement of the kingdom of Heaven or the kingdom of Satan – a contest for an advance or a retrograde in civilization.”<sup>400</sup> Prophetically the New York Times remarked:

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<sup>395</sup> Chicago Press and Tribune, 28 and 29 July 1858.

<sup>396</sup> Peoria Transcript, 29 July 1858.

<sup>397</sup> Chicago Journal, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield) 29 July 1858.

<sup>398</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 31 July 1858.

<sup>399</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), n.d., in Nevins, Emergence of Lincoln, 1:375.

<sup>400</sup> Abraham Smith to Lincoln, Ridge Farm, Illinois, 20 July 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

“The battle must be close, severe, and doubtful. That it will be well fought is certain, and its results will be both important and memorable.”<sup>401</sup> And so they would be.

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<sup>401</sup> New York Times, 13 July 1858.