

Chapter Twenty

“I Am Now Going To Be Master”:

Inauguration

(February 23-March 4, 1861)

In 1861, the nation’s capital, with its 75,000 inhabitants, was little more impressive than it had been when Lincoln first set foot there thirteen years earlier.¹ “As in 1800 and 1850, so in 1860, the same rude colony was camped in the same forest, with the same unfinished Greek temples for work rooms, and sloughs for roads,” according to Henry Adams.² Henry Villard described it as “a great straggling encampment of brick and mortar, spread over an infinite deal of space, and diversified with half a dozen government palaces, all in a highly aggravating and inconvenient state of incompleteness. Its society is shifting, unreliable, and vagabondish to the last degree. It is always full of cormorants, speculators, and adventurers. . . . Its hotels are vast caravansaries of noise and rush, wherein the problem of exchanging a maximum of cash for a minimum of comfort, is in perpetual solution. Its markets are frightfully dear, its newspapers of no account, and its climate among the worst in the world.”³ Ohio Congressman Albert

¹ Margaret Leech, Reveille in Washington, 1860-1865 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 6-13; Constance M. Green, Washington (2 vols.; Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1962-63), 1:238-39; Ernest B. Furgurson, Freedom Rising: Washington in the Civil War (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004), 12-15.

² Henry Adams, The Education of Henry Adams: An Autobiography (Boston: Houghton & Mifflin, 1918), 99.

³ Washington correspondence by Sigma, 16 July, Cincinnati Commercial, 20 July 1861. Many years later Villard wrote that in 1861 “the place seemed like a large village, with its preponderance of plain, low brick

Gallatin Riddle called it an “unattractive, straggling, sodden town,” and an English journalist thought the city “looks run up in a night, like the cardboard cities which Potemkin erected to gratify the eyes of his imperial mistress on her tour through Russia; and it is impossible to remove the impression that, when Congress is over, the whole place is taken down, and packed up again till wanted.” It was traversed by a noisome canal that was little more than a “shallow open sewer . . . breeding malaria, tadpoles, and mosquitoes.”⁴ That waterway made the capital stink badly, as a government report noted: “The accumulated filth and excrement of the city is constantly held in a state of semi-solution in this hotbed of putrefaction, by means of the ebb and flow of the tides, over a surface of more than a million square feet. And whatever portion of it ultimately finds its way into the Potomac River is spread out in thinner proportion over several hundred acres of flats immediately in front of the city, the surface of which is exposed to the action of the sun at intervals during the day, and the miasma from which contaminates every breath of air which passes, from that direction, through or over the city.”⁵

Lincoln’s arrival cheered up the town. On the day after that surprising event, the influential journalist John W. Forney noticed “more joyous faces this Sabbath morning than I have met in years. The friends of the Union, on the streets and in the hotels, are full of buoyant hope, and the enemies of the Union are correspondingly cast down.” The president-elect’s appearance among them, “like the return of Napoleon to Paris from

or wooden structures, wide, mostly unpaved streets, small shops, general lack of business activity, and a distinctly Southern air of indolence and sloth.” Its many hotels “were poorly kept,” and it “could not boast a single decent restaurant, but had no end of bar-rooms.” Villard, Memoirs, 1:154.

⁴ Albert G. Riddle, Recollections of War Times: Reminiscences of Men and Events in Washington, 1860-1865 (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1895), 7-8; Edward Dicey, Spectator of America, ed. Herbert Mitgang (first published in 1863 under the title Six Months in the Federal States; Chicago, Quadrangle Books, 1971), 61-62.

⁵ Report of the Secretary of the Interior (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1863), 687.

Elba, has effected a magical change in the opinions of politicians, and the anticipations of the local population.”⁶ Yet people were unsure what the president elect’s policy would be, for his speeches en route to the capital had oscillated between hard-line and conciliatory approaches to secession. On February 20, D. W. Bartlett noted that nobody “knows yet how far Lincoln will go to pacify the South. Maybe not an inch – and still perhaps a good ways.”⁷

Lincoln, suffering from fatigue, relaxed before breakfasting with Seward, who at 11 a.m. escorted him to the White House.⁸ Their call surprised President Buchanan. After a brief chat with the retiring chief executive, Lincoln was introduced to the members of his cabinet.⁹ On the way back to Willard’s, he called on General Scott briefly. That afternoon, the president-elect was besieged by importunate visitors. According to Iowa Senator James Harlan, he “was overwhelmed with callers. The room in which he stood, the corridors and halls and stairs leading to it, were crowded full of people, each one, apparently, intent on obtaining an opportunity to say a few words to him privately.”¹⁰ After calling on Lincoln the morning of February 28, Iowa Congressman Samuel R. Curtis reported that the president-elect “is overwhelmed with visitors and oppressed with care.”¹¹ On March 2, John Hay reported that his boss “sits all day in his parlor at Willard’s, receiving moist delegations of bores. That he is not before this torn to pieces,

⁶ Washington correspondence by Forney, 24 February, Philadelphia Press, 25 February 1861.

⁷ Washington correspondence by Van [D.W. Bartlett], 20 February, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 22 February 1861.

⁸ Washington correspondence, 23 February, Cincinnati Gazette, 25 February 1861.

⁹ Washington correspondence, 23 February, Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 27 February 1861.

¹⁰ James Harlan, “Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln,” in Ida M. Tarbell, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (2 vols.; New York: McClure, Phillips, 1900), 1:423.

¹¹ Samuel R. Curtis to his wife, Washington, 28 February 1861, Colton, ed., “The Irrepressible Conflict of 1861,” 32-33.

like Actaeon, is due to the vigor of his constitution, and the imperturbability of his temperament.”¹² One caller was pleased by Lincoln’s “offhand, unassuming manner.”¹³ Among the leaders he conferred with on February 23 were the Illinois congressional delegation and Montgomery Blair.

That evening, Mary Lincoln and the rest of the entourage reached Washington. In Baltimore, an unruly mob had greeted them with three loud cheers for both Jefferson Davis and the Confederacy, and three groans for Lincoln.¹⁴ As the party detrained in the Monument City, the crowd surged back and forth with such power that it drove people off the platform and trampled them. It also tore the clothes of some, including one man whose coat was stripped off.¹⁵ Rough-neck boys and men, not content merely to knock the hats from the heads of leading Republicans, surrounded Mrs. Lincoln’s car, insulting her rudely.¹⁶ Captain Pope overheard many ugly expressions and observed several menacing faces amid the crowd, which he thought “consisted precisely of the people capable of [committing an] outrage.”¹⁷

¹² Washington correspondence by John Hay, 2 March, New York World, 5 March 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 51.

¹³ Benjamin Brown French, Witness to the Young Republic: A Yankee’s Journal, 1828-1870, ed. Donald B. Cole and John J. McDonough (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1989), 348.

¹⁴ L. K. Bowen to Howell Cobb, Washington, 25 February 1861, Ulrich B. Phillips, ed., The Correspondence of Robert Toombs, Alexander H. Stephens, and Howell Cobb (2 vols.; Annual Report of the American Historical Association for the Year 1911; Washington: n.p., 1913), 2:546. Bowen said that if Lincoln had been on that train, “contrary to my preconceived opinions, I now believe he would have met with trouble. The cause of the feeling was the impudent app[oin]tm[en]t the day before of 100 Black Republicans to escort him through the city.” The Baltimore Sun pointed out that the police had been withdrawn from the station upon learning that Lincoln was in Washington; to argue, therefore, that the president-elect would have suffered the indignities that his entourage suffered was unrealistic. Baltimore Sun, 27, 28 February 1861; John C. Robinson, “Baltimore in 1861,” Magazine of American History 14 (1885): 259.

¹⁵ Baltimore Sun, 25 February 1861.

¹⁶ Washington correspondence, 24 February, New York Times, 25 and 26 February 1861.

¹⁷ John Pope, “War Reminiscences, IX,” National Tribune (Washington), 5 February 1891, in Peter Cozzens and Robert I. Girardi, eds., The Military Memoirs of General John Pope (Chapel Hill: University

Nonetheless, at lunch Mrs. Lincoln told her hosts “that she felt at home in Baltimore, and being a Kentuckian, was sometimes too conservative for some of Mr. Lincoln’s friends.”¹⁸ She added that “her husband was determined to pursue a conservative course.”¹⁹ With “much indignation” she denounced Lincoln’s advisors and said that she had recommended that he “not depart from the route which he had first intended to take.”²⁰ (In Washington she continued to make “no secret of her conservative opinions.”)²¹

That night, after dining with Seward, Lincoln held an informal reception for members of the Washington Peace Conference. Lucius E. Chittenden, a delegate from Vermont, admired his great aplomb in dealing with a group which included some political opponents. “The manner in which he adjusted his conversation to representatives of different sections and opinions was striking,” Chittenden recalled. “He could not have appeared more natural or unstudied in his manner if he had been entertaining a company of neighbors in his Western home.”²² Lincoln impressed them with his uncanny memory. As he was introduced to the delegates by their last names, he recalled most of their first names and middle initials. To several he mentioned their family histories.²³ Betraying no

of North Carolina Press, 1998), 181. See also the eyewitness account by John C. Robinson, in Peter Cozzens, ed., Battles and Leaders of the Civil War, Volume 5 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 5:23-24.

¹⁸ Washington correspondence, n.d., Baltimore Sun, n.d., copied in the Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 28 February 1861.

¹⁹ Washington correspondence, 27 February, Cincinnati Gazette, 28 February 1861.

²⁰ Baltimore Exchange, 25 February 1861.

²¹ Washington correspondence, 25 February, New York Commercial Advertiser, 26 February 1861.

²² Lucius E. Chittenden, Recollections of President Lincoln and His Administration (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1891), 71.

²³ Washington correspondence, 23 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 25 February 1861.

anxiety, he conversed with them warmly, candidly, and with animation.²⁴ He paid special attention to the Southern delegates, particularly the Virginia Unionist William C. Rives, a former senator and minister to France.²⁵ The diminutive, venerable Rives told his son that when he was presented to Lincoln, the president-elect “took me cordially by the hand – said he had imagined I was at least six foot high, as he always formed an idea of every person he had heard much of. On my remarking to him . . . that I felt myself to be a small man in his presence – he said aloud, so that all the company heard him, ‘you are any how a giant in intellect.’ I bowed & retired. This piece of Western free & easy compliment passed off among his admirers for first rate Parisian cleverness & tact.”²⁶ (Some Southern delegates took umbrage at Lincoln’s words, calling him a “boor” and a “cross-roads lawyer.”)²⁷ To Rives, Lincoln appeared “to be good natured & well-intentioned, but utterly unimpressed with the gravity of the crisis & the magnitude of his duties.” He “seems to think of nothing but jokes & stories. I fear, therefore, we are to expect but little from his influence with the Convention.”²⁸

When meeting the unusually tall Alexander W. Doniphan of Missouri, the president-elect asked: “Is this Doniphan, who made that splendid march across the Plains, and swept the swift Camanchee before him?” Modestly the general acknowledged that he

²⁴ Washington correspondence by John W. Forney, 26 February, Philadelphia Press, 27 February 1861; Chittenden, Recollections of Lincoln, 69.

²⁵ C. to the editor, Washington, 19 May, New York Times, 2 June 1862. On Rives, see Patrick Sowle, “The Trials of a Virginia Unionist: William Cabell Rives and the Secession Crisis, 1860-1861,” Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 80 (1972): 3-20.

²⁶ W. C. Rives to W. C. Rives, Jr., Washington, 24 February 1861, Rives Papers, Library of Congress. According to a son of Maryland Congressman John W. Crisfield, who accompanied Rives, Lincoln said: “Why, I had supposed that all Virginia statesmen were great men!” Failing to get the joke, Rives replied: “Sir, I feel very humble in this presence.” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 87-88.

²⁷ C. to the editor, Washington, 19 May 1862, New York Times, 2 June 1862.

²⁸ W. C. Rives to W. C. Rives, Jr., Washington, 24 February 1861, Rives Papers, Library of Congress.

was that man. “Then you come up to the standard of my expectations,” said Lincoln.²⁹ Recalling their days in Congress together, Lincoln said to Reverdy Johnson of Maryland, “I had to bid you good-bye just at the time when our intimacy had ripened to a point for me to tell you my stories.”³⁰

Asked if he backed the plan that the Peace Conferees seemed likely to adopt – James Guthrie’s report recommending the restoration of the Missouri Compromise line, along with half a dozen less controversial measures – Lincoln allegedly “said he had not thoroughly examined it, and was not therefore prepared to give an opinion. If there was no surrender of principle in it[,] it would be acceptable to him.”³¹ (Unlike the Crittenden Compromise, this proposal stipulated that no new territory could be acquired without the approval of a majority of both the Slave and the Free States.) Though this statement seemed to indicate that Lincoln would support compromise measures, Massachusetts delegate John Z. Goodrich reported after a brief conversation with Lincoln that “I cannot doubt he is firm & desires no compromise.”³² Most callers were unable to tell which way the discrete president-elect leaned. “Everybody here seems to look to Lincoln & Lincoln says ‘delighted to see you &c &c’, but no one gets his tongue & everyone has his ear,” reported a fellow guest at Willard’s.³³

One who did get Lincoln’s tongue was the New York merchant William E. Dodge, who expressed fears that “the whole nation shall be plunged into bankruptcy” and

²⁹ Gunderson, Old Gentlemen’s Convention, 84-85; Washington correspondence, 23 February, New York World, 25 February 1861

³⁰ Washington correspondence by “our special correspondent” (Uriah Painter), n.d., Philadelphia Inquirer, 25 February 1861.

³¹ Washington correspondence 24 February, New York Herald, 25 February 1861.

³² Goodrich to John A. Andrew, Washington, 23 February 1861, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

³³ Wilder Dwight to Horace Gray, Washington, 27 February 1861, Gray Papers, Library of Congress.

that “grass shall grow in the streets of our commercial cities.” Sternly Lincoln replied that he would carry out his oath of office to defend the Constitution: “It must be so respected, obeyed, enforced, and defended, let the grass grow where it may.” In a more conciliatory tone he added: “If it depends upon me, the grass will not grow anywhere except in the fields and the meadows.”³⁴

The Peace Conference seemed unable to reach a consensus; on February 26, it voted down Guthrie’s report. The following day, however, after the Illinois delegation reversed itself – perhaps at Lincoln’s instigation – that report was approved, cheering up friends of conciliation.³⁵ “Every one seemed to breathe easier and freer than before,” wrote a former Ohio congressman. Southern Unionists “were especially joyous and reanimated, not because they had obtained all they had desired, but because they believed the recommendations of the convention would effectually arrest the tide of secession in their states if they were favorably received by Congress.”³⁶ Lincoln’s Illinois friend William H. L. Wallace, who was in the capital angling for a government job, told his wife that the outcome of the conference “gives great satisfaction to all conservative men of all parties. Indeed the crisis seemed so threatening that most good men forgot party & only regarded the safety of the country.” Governor Thomas Hicks of Maryland informed Wallace “that if the conference adjourned without doing anything, . . . he should immediately call the Legislature of his state together & the state would at once secede.” Similarly, John Bell confided that Tennessee would probably have pulled out of the

³⁴ Chittenden, Recollections of Lincoln, 74-75.

³⁵ Gunderson, Old Gentlemen’s Convention, 81-92.

³⁶ S. F. Vinton to Robert C. Winthrop, Washington, 1 March 1861, Winthrop Autograph Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Union if the Conference had fizzled.³⁷ On February 26, Hicks told Lincoln the same thing.³⁸

Lincoln may have persuaded his fellow Illinoisans serving as delegates to change their minds, even though he had earlier informed a Rhode Island delegate that he opposed Guthrie's scheme.³⁹ One member of the Prairie State delegation, John M. Palmer, recalled that the president-elect "advised us to deal as liberally as possible with the subject of slavery." (Palmer voted for the Guthrie report with some reluctance; before leaving Washington, he told the president-elect: "I would have to go into the army, in order to prove . . . that I was a sincere anti-slavery man.")⁴⁰ The motion to reconsider was made by Lincoln's former law partner, good friend, mentor, and political ally, Stephen T. Logan. On February 25, John W. Forney reported that Palmer and Logan "have been closeted with him [Lincoln] since his arrival here."⁴¹ The "reconsideration was attributed

³⁷ W. H. L. Wallace to Ann Wallace, Washington, 27 February 1861, Wallace-Dickey Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library.

³⁸ Washington correspondence, 27 February, Philadelphia Public Ledger, 28 February 1861; Washington Globe, 27 February 1861.

³⁹ Washington correspondence, 27 February, Philadelphia Public Ledger, 28 February 1861; Washington correspondence, 26 February, New York Evening Post, 27 February 1861. The delegate, Samuel Ames, had called on Lincoln with his state's governor, William Sprague.

⁴⁰ Palmer, Personal Recollections of John M. Palmer: The Story of an Earnest Life (Cincinnati: Clarke, 1901), 84, 88-89. When it was rumored that the Illinois delegation had switched its vote at the urging of Caleb B. Smith, Thomas J. Turner assured the president-elect that he and his colleagues had not acted in response to a hint from Smith: "In justice to Mr Smith I must say that Judge Palmer and myself of our own volition and without seeing or consulting Mr. Smith or any other member of the convention agreed to cooperate with Judge Logan in moving the reconsideration." Turner to Lincoln, Washington, 28 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. This statement is sometimes interpreted as proof that Lincoln did not urge the Illinoisans to change course. Robert Gray Gunderson, Old Gentleman's Convention: The Washington Peace Conference of 1861 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), 89-90. But since Palmer testified that Lincoln had advised the delegation "to deal as liberally as possible" with slavery, and since Turner asserted that he and Palmer, without prodding from Smith or any other delegates, had decided to back Logan's move to reconsider, Turner's statement cannot be reasonably construed to prove that Lincoln had nothing to do with the Illinoisans' change of heart. One journalist reported that "Lincoln is understood to have given them [the Illinois delegation to the Peace Conference] no very positive satisfaction as to what he wishes done, but he said that he would be very thankful to those who will settle the matter." Washington correspondence, 24 February, Philadelphia Inquirer, 25 February 1861.

⁴¹ Washington correspondence by Forney, 25 February, Philadelphia Press, 26 February 1861. Three days

to the interference of Mr. Lincoln or of his recognized friends,” a Massachusetts delegate recalled.⁴²

On February 26, the convention adjourned earlier than planned, evidently so that delegates could meet with the president-elect.⁴³ That night, Stephen A. Douglas begged Lincoln to consult with the Illinois commissioners to the Peace Conference and thereby save the Union. The Little Giant warned that if the conference failed to agree on a compromise plan, the Upper South and Border States might well secede. He “reminded Mr. Lincoln that he had children as well as Mr. Douglas, and implored him, ‘in God’s name, to act the patriot, and to save to our children a country to live in.’” Lincoln “listened respectfully and kindly, and assured Mr. Douglas that his mind was engrossed with the great theme which they had been discussing, and expressed his gratification at the interview.”⁴⁴ The president-elect then met with Illinois’s delegates, who the next day voted as he instructed.

That same night several other commissioners (including Rives and George W. Summers of Virginia; Guthrie and Charles S. Morehead of Kentucky; and Doniphan) also urged the president-elect to support a compromise.⁴⁵ Lincoln reminded Rives of Aesop’s fable about the lion in love with the beautiful damsel, “and how the lion who desired to

later Forney wrote about the reconsideration of the original negative vote on the Guthrie report: “it is stated that after the vote of Illinois had been thrown against the first section of the series of recommendations in the Peace Conference, he [Lincoln] consented that the motion to reconsider the vote by which that section was rejected should come from Illinois, and accordingly the motion was made by one of the Commissioners from his own State.” Washington correspondence by Forney, 28 February, Philadelphia Press, 1 March 1861.

⁴² George S. Boutwell, Reminiscences of Sixty Years in Public Affairs (New York: McClure, Phillips, 1902), 1:274.

⁴³ “Congressional Notes” by “Ezek Richards,” Washington States and Union, 28 February 1861.

⁴⁴ Washington correspondence, 27 February, Philadelphia Press, 28 February 1861. See also James Pollock, “Lincoln & Douglas,” undated manuscript, Lincoln Papers, Brown University.

⁴⁵ Washington correspondence, 27 February, New York Herald, New York Tribune, 28 February 1861.

pay his addresses, solicited permission from the bride's father, and how the father consented, but with the advice that as the lion's teeth were sharp and the claws long, and not at all handsome, he advised the King of Beasts to pull out the one and cut off the other, which being done, the good father easily knocked the lion in the head. So when we have surrendered Fort Sumter, South Carolina will do this with us." When Rives and others insisted that Sumter "could not be relieved without the loss of thousands of lives, and to hold it was but a barren honor," Lincoln replied: "You, gentlemen, are members of the Convention. Go to Richmond. Pass a resolution that Virginia will not in any event secede, and I may then agree with you in the fact a State any day is worth more than a fort!"⁴⁶ Morehead recorded that in response to Rives' remarks about Virginia seceding if coercive measures were taken, Lincoln jumped up and exclaimed: "Mr. Rives! Mr. Rives! if Virginia will stay in, I will withdraw the troops from Fort Sumpter."⁴⁷ (In October 1861, referring to this conversation, the president "talked about Secession Compromise and other such. He spoke of a committee of Southern Pseudo Unionists coming to him before Inauguration for guarantees &c. He promised to evacuate Sumter if they would break up the Convention, without any row or nonsense. They demurred.")⁴⁸ This was not the last time Lincoln would make that offer.

The following day, just after the Guthrie scheme won approval with the help of the Illinoisans, Lincoln told Washington city leaders "that though the plan of settlement

⁴⁶ A special dispatch, n.d., to the New York Express, n.d., copied in the Richmond Enquirer, 16 March 1861. A similar account can be found in Speed, Reminiscences of Lincoln, 31-32.

⁴⁷ Charles S. Morehead, speech delivered in Liverpool, England, on 9 October 1862, Liverpool Mercury, 13 October 1862, excerpted in David Rankin Barbee and Milledge L. Bonham, Jr., eds., "Fort Sumter Again," Mississippi Valley Historical Review 28 (1941): 71-72; Morehead to Crittenden, Staten Island, New York, 23 February 1862, in Mrs. Chapman Coleman, The Life of John J. Crittenden (2 vols.; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1871), 2:337.

⁴⁸ Burlingame and Ettliger, eds., Hay Diary, 28 (entry for 28 October 1861).

adopted by the Peace Convention was not the one he would have suggested, he regarded it as very fortunate for the country that its labors had thus eventuated harmoniously.”⁴⁹ Some stiff-back Republicans who held Lincoln responsible for the passage of the Guthrie plan loudly denounced the conference’s action and threatened “to give their faithless choice for the Presidency the slip.”⁵⁰ In the senate, the only Republican who endorsed submitting the Peace Conference plan (a constitutional amendment with seven sections) to the states was Lincoln’s close friend Edward D. Baker. No hard evidence suggests that the Oregon senator took that stand at Lincoln’s urging, but he may well have done so. Despite Baker’s support, the Guthrie proposal went nowhere in Congress.⁵¹

Threatening to go somewhere was a force bill, which Lincoln helped scuttle. Introduced by Ohio Congressman Benjamin Stanton, that measure authorized the president to call up the militia to suppress an insurrection against the U.S. government and take other military steps. After heated debate, in which Southern Unionists anathematized it, the bill was scheduled to come before the House for a vote on March 1.⁵² That day, Representative Alexander R. Boteler of Virginia, fearing that his state would secede immediately upon the passage of such legislation, called on the president-elect, who greeted him warmly: “I’m really glad you have come, and wish that more of you Southern gentlemen would call and see me, as these are times when there should be a full, fair, and frank interchange of sentiment and suggestion among all who have the good

⁴⁹ Washington Evening Star, 28 February 1861. “Though not his precise words, such is the substance of his remarks.”

⁵⁰ Washington correspondence, 27 February, New York Herald, 28 February 1861.

⁵¹ Gunderson, Old Gentlemen’s Convention, 93-95. The Senate rejected it, 28 to 7; the House did not even vote on it.

⁵² Virginia Unionists were especially concerned. Joseph Segar to Stephen A. Douglas, Richmond, 25 February 1861, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

of the country at heart.” Boteler asked if Lincoln would help kill the pending force bill. “Of course,” replied the president-elect, “I am extremely anxious to see these sectional troubles settled peaceably and satisfactorily to all concerned. To accomplish that, I am willing to make almost any sacrifice, and to do anything in reason consistent with my sense of duty. . . . I’ll see what can be done about the bill you speak of. I think it can be stopped, and that I may promise you it will be.” When Boteler requested permission to inform his colleagues of this pledge, Lincoln replied: “By no means, for that would make trouble. The question would at once be asked, what right I had to interfere with the legislation of this Congress. Whatever is to be done in the matter, must be done quietly.”⁵³ It is not certain that Lincoln took any steps to defeat the force bill, but he probably did so; that very night the House adjourned before voting on the measure, thus killing it. (Evidently it was thought that the Militia Act of 1795 already provided the necessary authority for the president to summon troops to suppress any insurrection.)⁵⁴ His good friend and political confidant Elihu B. Washburne led the move to adjourn. Southern Unionists, convinced that Lincoln would not have the power – and lacked the inclination – to use force against the seceded states, were cheered temporarily. Six weeks later they would feel differently.⁵⁵ Whatever he may have done about the force bill, Lincoln did help defeat Jonathan A. Bingham’s bill providing for the offshore collection of tariff revenues.⁵⁶

⁵³ A. R. Boteler, “Mr. Lincoln and the Force Bill,” The Annals of the War Written by Leading Participants North and South, comp. A. K. McClure (Philadelphia: Times, 1879), 220-27.

⁵⁴ Washington correspondence, 26 February, Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 1 March 1861.

⁵⁵ Washington correspondence by “Independent” [James E. Harvey], 7 March, Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette, 8 March 1861.

⁵⁶ Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 256.

Lincoln met congressmen and senators on February 25, when Seward escorted him to the Capitol. The New York senator's face glowed with obvious delight as he introduced the president-elect to everyone as if he were a child showing off a new plaything.⁵⁷ In the House, Representatives immediately swarmed around him and received warm, cordial, enthusiastic handshakes.⁵⁸ Among the less enthusiastic congressmen greeting him was Henry L. Dawes, who had pictured the incoming chief executive in his mind's eye as a kind of deity. "Never did a god come tumbling down more suddenly and completely than did mine," Dawes remembered, "as the unkempt, ill-formed, loose-jointed, and disproportioned figure of Mr. Lincoln appeared at the door. Weary, anxious, struggling to be cheerful under a burden of trouble he must keep to himself, with thoughts far off or deep hidden, he was presented to the representatives of the nation over which he was to be placed as chief magistrate."⁵⁹ He towered over the Representatives, resembling "a lighthouse surrounded by waves."⁶⁰ As Seward busily urged Democrats to allow themselves to be introduced to Lincoln, he encountered resistance; ominously only a few accepted the invitation. Virginia Senator James M. Mason, scowling contemptuously, rebuffed Seward's appeal.⁶¹ In the House, about a dozen Southern Representatives ostentatiously remained seated when the president-elect

⁵⁷ Washington correspondence, n.d., Cincinnati Enquirer, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 20 March 1861.

⁵⁸ Washington correspondence, 25 February, New York Herald, 26 February 1861.

⁵⁹ Dawes, "Washington in the Winter before the War," 166.

⁶⁰ Washington correspondence, 26 February, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 2 March 1861.

⁶¹ Washington correspondence, 25 February, New York Tribune, 26 February 1861; Adam Gurowski, Diary (3 vols.; Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1862-66), 1:15 (March 1861); Washington correspondence, 25 February, Cincinnati Gazette, 26 February 1861; Washington correspondence by Van, 27 February, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 1 March 1861; Washington correspondence by "Kappa," 26 February, Philadelphia Press, 27 February 1861.

entered the chamber.⁶² Roger A. Pryor of Virginia “tossed back his snaky locks and tried to assume the frowning giant, but only succeeded in looking the malicious schoolboy.”⁶³

Some Southerners found Lincoln even more disillusioning than did Dawes.

Alexander W. Doniphan of Missouri thought it was “very humiliating for an American to know that the present & future destiny of his country is wholly in the hands of one man, & that such a man as Lincoln – a man of no intelligence – no enlargement of views – as ridiculously [sic] vain and fantastic as a country boy with his first red Morocco hat – easily flattered into a belief that he is King Canute & can say to the waves or revolution, ‘Thus far shalt thou come and no farther.’”⁶⁴

Like some large, bipedal border collie, Seward shepherded Lincoln around Washington, while simultaneously stepping up his efforts to influence the president-elect’s policy decisions and appointments. Lincoln’s speeches on the train journey caused the Sage of Auburn to remark that the prospect of having to educate the Illinoisan made him “more depressed than he has been during the whole winter.”⁶⁵ That education was pursued earnestly in the hectic days of late February and early March, when Lincoln grew ever more conciliatory.

Lincoln proved a willing pupil under Seward’s tutelage, submitting his inaugural address to him for comment. He had already shown it to Carl Schurz, who approved of its hard-line tone, and to Orville H. Browning, who did not.⁶⁶ Browning thought the

⁶² National Intelligencer (Washington), 26 February 1861.

⁶³ Washington correspondence by S., 26 February, Chicago Tribune, 1 March 1861.

⁶⁴ Alexander Doniphan to John Doniphan, Washington, 22 February 1861, in Roger D. Launius, Alexander William Doniphan: Portrait of a Missouri Moderate (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 248.

⁶⁵ Charles Francis Adams, Jr., undated diary entry, in Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Charles Francis Adams, 1835-1915: An Autobiography (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1916), 78.

⁶⁶ Schurz to his wife, Springfield, 10 February 1861, Frederic Bancroft, ed., Speeches, Correspondence and

following passage too bellicose: “All the power at my disposal will be used to reclaim the public property and places which have fallen; to hold, occupy and possess these, and all other property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties on imports; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion of any State.” Browning suggested that it read: “All the power at my disposal will be used to hold, occupy and possess the property and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties on imports &c” and recommended “omitting the declaration of the purpose of reclamation, which will be construed into a threat, or menace, and will be irritating even in the border states.” Browning conceded that in principle the original draft was justified, but argued cogently that in “any conflict which may ensue between the government and the seceding States, it is very important that the traitors shall be the aggressors, and that they be kept constantly and palpably in the wrong. The first attempt that is made to furnish supplies or reinforcements to Sumter will induce aggression by South Carolina, and then the government will stand justified, before the entire country, in repelling that aggression, and retaking the forts. And so it will be everywhere, and all the places now occupied by traitors can be recaptured without affording them additional material with which to inflame the public mind by representing your inaugural as containing an irritating threat.”⁶⁷ Others echoed Browning’s advice, which Lincoln took,

Political Papers of Carl Schurz (6 vols.; New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1913), 1:179. On the train journey, Browning accompanied Lincoln as far as Indianapolis, where he concluded that there were so many hangers-on aboard the train that it would be best for him to return home. When he informed Lincoln of this decision, the president-elect took him to his room and gave him a copy of the inaugural to critique. Browning read it hastily, approved its contents, then asked if he might take it back and go over it more carefully. Lincoln agreed. Browning interviewed by Nicolay, Springfield, 17 June 1875, Michael Burlingame, ed., An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay's Interviews and Essays (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 5-6. Lincoln also showed the inaugural to David Davis. Willard L. King, Lincoln's Manager, David Davis (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1960), 175.

⁶⁷ Orville H. Browning to Lincoln, Springfield, 17 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

making his most important change to that document.⁶⁸

In Washington, Seward suggested many more alterations “to soothe the public mind.” Like Browning, the New York senator tried to make the document more forbearing and less belligerent. Boastfully he told Lincoln, “I . . . have devoted myself singly to the study of the case here, with advantages of access and free communication with all parties of all sections. . . . Only the soothing words which I have spoken have saved us and carried us along thus far. Every loyal man, and indeed I think every disloyal man in the South will tell you this.” The modest Lincoln may well have recoiled at this display of raw egotism, but he took the advice of his secretary-of-state-designate to drop an allusion to the Chicago platform, which might be interpreted as too partisan; to soften his discussion of reclaiming government property and references to exercising power; and to add a conciliatory final paragraph.⁶⁹ The two men then discussed these changes. On March 3, Seward off-handedly told dinner guests: “Lincoln that day had shown to him his inaugural address, and had consulted with him in regard to it.” The New Yorker remarked “that while it would satisfy the whole country, it more than covered all his [Seward’s] heresies.” He added that the address showed Lincoln’s “curious vein of sentiment,” which Seward called “his most valuable mental attribute.”⁷⁰

Perhaps the most conciliatory portion of the address, which John Hay said struck the keynote, emphasized the tentative nature of Lincoln’s policy declarations: “So far as

⁶⁸ Cassius M. Clay to the editor of the New York World, n.p., 19 February 1861, Richard W. Thompson Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne; John G. Nicolay and John Hay, Abraham Lincoln: A History (10 vols.; New York: Century, 1890), 3:322.

⁶⁹ Seward to Lincoln, [Washington], 24 February 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester; Nicolay and Hay, Lincoln, 3:320-21.

⁷⁰ Charles Francis Adams, Jr., to Albert L. Bacheller, Boston, 20 January 1896, Wyles Collection, University of California at Santa Barbara; Adams, Autobiography, 95-96; Adams’s address to the Massachusetts Historical Society, February 1909, Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society 42 (1908-9): 147-48.

possible, the people everywhere shall have that sense of perfect security which is most favorable to calm thought and reflection. The course here indicated will be followed, unless current events, and experience, shall show a modification, or change, to be proper; and in every case and exigency, my best discretion will be exercised, according to circumstances actually existing, and with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution of the national troubles, and the restoration of paternal sympathies and, affections.”⁷¹ (The second sentence represented a considerable expansion of the original draft, which merely said: “This course will be pursued until current experience shall show a modification or change to be proper.”)

On March 1, Lincoln read a draft of the inaugural to the others who had accepted cabinet positions.⁷² He reportedly also submitted that document to the scrutiny of Senators Trumbull, Wade, and Fessenden, as well as to Norman B. Judd.⁷³ On March 3, William H. Bailhache of the Springfield Illinois State Journal, who came to Washington to help prepare copies of the inaugural, wrote his wife that the “original draft has been modified every day to suit the views of the different members of the Cabinet. The amendments are principally verbal & consist of softening some of the words & elaborating more at length some of the ideas contained in the original draft.”⁷⁴

While trying to wean Lincoln away from his hard-line positions and rhetoric,

⁷¹ Washington correspondence by John Hay, 4 March, New York World, 6 March 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln's Journalist, 52.

⁷² Washington correspondence by Ben: Perley Poore, 2 March, Boston Journal, 2 March 1861; Washington correspondence, n.d., New York Commercial, n.d., copied in the Baltimore Sun, 4 March 1861.

⁷³ Washington correspondence, 26 February, Chicago Tribune, 1 March 1861; Washington correspondence by Ben: Perley Poore, 1 March, Boston Journal, 1 March 1861.

⁷⁴ William H. Bailhache to his wife, Washington, 3 March 1861, Lincoln Collection, Indiana University. Edward L. Baker, who with Bailhache owned the Journal, was in the capital to help print revised copies of the address. They had printed the original draft for Lincoln back in Springfield.

Seward also lobbied intently for pro-compromise cabinet aspirants. Five of the seven posts had yet to be filled, including the office of secretary of the treasury. The struggle over that important position raged for days, with hard-liners supporting Salmon P. Chase and soft-liners, led by Seward and Weed, favoring Simon Cameron. Chase reportedly “has Lincoln by the throat and clings with the tenacity of a bull dog to his claim – against an amount of opposition wholly unprecedented.”⁷⁵ That the Pennsylvania boss would have a seat in the cabinet had been virtually settled during Lincoln’s February 21 stopover in Philadelphia, where the president-elect met with James Milliken, a leading industrialist, and several more Cameron supporters. Milliken said that he was authorized to speak for McClure, Curtin, and other opponents of the Chief; that they had withdrawn their objections to Cameron and now supported his candidacy; and that the leading iron and coal men of the Keystone State desired his appointment. Lincoln replied “that it relieved him greatly” but that “he was not . . . prepared to decide the matter and would not until he should reach Washington. That, it had been suggested, it would perhaps be proper and desirable to retain some of the present cabinet officers, for a short time at least, if they would consent to remain.” He referred specifically to the strong Unionists Joseph Holt, Edwin M. Stanton, and John A. Dix, who had stiffened Buchanan’s backbone.⁷⁶

Why the anti-Cameron forces capitulated is a mystery. According to one account, Cameron, acting on the president-elect’s willingness to appoint any Pennsylvanian that

⁷⁵ Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis Du Pont, [Washington], [February or March 1861], transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

⁷⁶ Milliken to Cameron, Philadelphia, 22 February 1861, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress. Cf. Titian J. Coffey to Cameron, Harrisburg, 22 February 1861, and Samuel A. Purviance to Lincoln, Harrisburg, 22 February 1861, ibid.

the state's party leaders could agree upon, disingenuously offered to step aside in favor of Thaddeus Stevens if McClure, Curtin, and his other critics would withdraw their charges against him. When those critics complied, Cameron double-crossed them by using a letter from McClure to convince Lincoln that Pennsylvania Republicans were united behind the Chief.⁷⁷ (Though he asserted that he was “very friendly” toward Stevens, Lincoln told a

⁷⁷ The evidence for this hypothesis is suggestive but not conclusive. Baringer, House Dividing, 289; Samuel A. Purviance to Cameron, Harrisburg, 23 February 1861, Cameron Papers Library of Congress. McClure recalled that “Cameron regarded his appointment as impossible, and he proposed to Stevens to join in pressing him. Stevens wrote me of the fact; and I procured strong letters from the State administration in his favor. A few days after Stevens wrote me a most bitter letter, saying that Cameron had deceived him, and was then attempting to enforce his own appointment. The bond was demanded of Lincoln; and that decided the matter.” McClure to Ward Hill Lamon, Philadelphia, 8 May 1871, Jeremiah Black Papers, Library of Congress. Some contemporary evidence supports this version of events. On January 21, McClure wrote to Stevens from Harrisburg saying: “I reached here at noon today, and was sent for as soon as I entered the Senate to have an interview with Judge Swett. He informed me that he has heard the friends of Cameron here and he now wished to hear his opponents. I told him that I had but a single sentence to add to what I had already given to Mr. Lincoln himself: and that was that Mr. Lincoln has now ceased to have the right to appoint Mr. Cameron; that it could be excused on no pretext whatever, in as much as the whole leading political combination of the state had recommended you, while but a faction had recommended Cameron, and even they had abandoned him and joined in pressing you. He expressed great amazement at the information, altho he admitted that he had seen Cameron just before leaving Washington. He said that Cameron was positively a[?] to the appointment of any one but himself from Penna, and Swett added that if we did not accede to Cameron we would be without a representative and that Chase would have the Treasury. He is thoroughly in the Cameron interest and exhausted himself while here to frighten us by the danger of an unsound Tariff man in the Treasury. The Chester and Delepeare members were present at the time; and we all told him that come what may, the appointment of Cameron would not be assented to.” Thaddeus Stevens Papers, Library of Congress. On January 19, Stevens related a similar story: “Some ten days ago it was rumored that Genl. Cameron had declined a seat in Mr Lincoln's cabinet. One of my colleagues suggested my name for the place. I objected untill it was ascertained from Mr Cameron himself if it were true as I would have no contest on my account. A short time afterwards General Cameron called on me as he said to inform me that he had absolutely declined going into the cabinet, and wished me to allow my name to be used as most likely to unite all factions— I asked him, as a question of honor, whether he might not yet be induced to reconsider his determination and accept. He answered that there was no earthly contingency which would induce him to go into Mr. Lincoln's cabinet; and again urged me to allow my name to be presented. I consented. His friends in the House who had signed his recommendation joined in mine under his advice—

“If it be possible (as I fear) that he has so far forgotten his honor as to consent to be again considered a candidate, you may well understand how I should view it personally. I do not say what I know of the Generals antecedents— But his character may be well inferred from this act— I must ever look upon him as a man destitute of honor and honesty[.]” Stevens to Elihu B. Washburne, Washington, 19 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. On February 10, Stevens reported that Cameron had just informed him that he had “positively declined.” Stevens then asked for friends to write on his behalf. Beverly Wilson Palmer, ed., The Selected Papers of Thaddeus Stevens (2 vols.; Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997-98), 1:207. “I was surprised this morning to learn that Genl Cameron stated yesterday to some gentlemen that he had not declined the appointment which it is said you offered to him some time since and I have thought it proper to state to you what was said by him with reference to the selection of Mr Stevens. After it was generally understood that Mr Cameron had declined, the friends of Mr S. without any consultation with him concluded to present his name for your consideration in the full belief

Pennsylvanian that at sixty-seven, the congressman was too old. That seems implausible, for Stevens was the same age as Attorney-General-Designate Edward Bates. Doubtless Lincoln considered the Great Commoner too radical rather than too ancient.)⁷⁸ Milliken paved the way for Cameron's victory by assuring McClure and Curtin that they and their allies would receive a fair share of the patronage.⁷⁹ David Davis helped Cameron's cause by promising to read to Lincoln a list (prepared by Samuel A. Purviance) of reasons why the Chief should be appointed treasury secretary.⁸⁰

In addition, some Pennsylvanians feared that if they could not settle on one of their own, their state's seat in the cabinet might be given to a New Jersey leader like William L. Dayton.⁸¹ Not all Pennsylvanians regarded Dayton unfavorably. Among them

that no more satisfactory appointment could be made; as he of all men, could most thoroughly unite the friends of the administration in Penna Mr Cameron hearing of this came the same morning into the House to see Mr S. and said to him that he had learned his friends were consulting in reference to this matter and he wished to confirm to him the public rumor of his declination, – that he had found no place open to him but the War Department and that, not being agreeable to him he had absolutely declined to accept; and was glad that Mr Stevens friends had brought him forward. Mr Stevens said the him "Genl I have understood that my friends have spoken of me in connection with a cabinet appointment, and I desire to know if your declination is absolute and unconditional for if it be otherwise I will positively not suffer my name so to be used" To this the Genl. repeated that he had declined absolutely and was pleased with the prospect of Mr Ss appointment. He made similar statements to many of his friends both in & out of Congress who will at any time confirm what I say." Samuel S. Blair to Lincoln, Washington, 17 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. In late January, Frank Blair visited Springfield and reported that some of Lincoln's closest friends believed that Cameron's appointment had "been accomplished by a trick – that he [Lincoln] was assured the appointment would not be accepted, but ought to be tendered." Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, St. Louis, 24 January 1861, Blair Family Papers, Library of Congress. On February 2, McClure reported to Stevens that Cameron the previous day had notified Curtin that if the governor were to endorse the Chief's bid for a cabinet post, the matter would be settled harmoniously. Curtin balked. On February 2, McClure rebuffed an emissary from Cameron who offered to give him whatever he wanted, including a seat in the U. S. Senate, if he would support the Chief. McClure to Stevens, Harrisburg, 2 February [1861], Palmer, ed., Stevens Papers, 1:198-99.

⁷⁸ William M. Reynolds to Edward McPherson, Springfield, 21 January 1861, McPherson Papers, Library of Congress; William Larimer, Jr., to Cameron, Pittsburgh, 6 February 1861, Cameron Papers Library of Congress; Hans L. Trefousse, Thaddeus Stevens: Nineteenth-Century Egalitarian (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 105.

⁷⁹ James Milliken to Cameron, Harrisburg, 19 February 1861, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸⁰ Purviance to Lincoln, Harrisburg, 22 February 1861, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸¹ On February 27, the New York Tribune reported that the "Cabinet is still unsettled, and the programme will remain undetermined until the Treasury Department is decided. All active interest now concentrates on that point. Mr. Lincoln has partially heard the friends of Gov. Chase and Gen. Cameron . . . all day.

was Congressman John Covode, who told Lincoln: “I am satisfied that what I said to you about Dayton being a man that would suit Penna was right.”⁸² Robert McKnight, another Pennsylvania Representative, offered similar advice: “I firmly believe that the selection of Judge Dayton of N. Jersey would be more acceptable to the people of Penna” than Cameron’s selection.⁸³ Other colleagues in the House supported McKnight and Covode.⁸⁴ Governor Curtin reported that “there is a large sentiment in [favor of] Dayton for a place in the cabinet & I concur with it.” The Jerseyman “would be very acceptable in this state.”⁸⁵ James E. Harvey of Philadelphia informed Lincoln that “we have no man of sufficient mark in Pennsylvania, to whom the concession of such a [cabinet] position, would be spontaneously made. All the interests & sympathies of New Jersey, are identical with those of Pennsylvania, and a selection from these would be perfectly satisfactory, & I think, after much reflection, advisable.”⁸⁶ Other Pennsylvania Republicans demurred. “We want no New Jersey statesman for Pennsylvania,” declared Thaddeus Stevens.⁸⁷ Cameron said he would just as soon “have an enemy at home as in N Jersey & did not want Dayton to be appointed.”⁸⁸

Committees, delegations, partisans, and patriots, crowded the hotel from early morning. . . Each retires convinced that its candidate will succeed. There is a strong disposition now among a large interest to compromise on Mr. Dayton, against whom no objection can be made.” Baringer, House Dividing, 31.

⁸² John Covode to Lincoln, Washington, 16 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸³ Robert McKnight to Lincoln, Washington, 29 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸⁴ Samuel S. Blair to Lincoln, Washington, 15 January 1861: “I neglected to state in the letter signed by Mr Campbell & myself that a number of the gentlemen of our Delegation who requested the appointment of Mr. Dayton whilst they were opposing Genl. C. have Expressed their regret that they are unable, for that cause alone to join in the application for Mr. S.”

⁸⁵ Andrew G. Curtin to Alexander K. McClure, Bellefonte, 2 January 1861, telegram, Lincoln Papers Library of Congress

⁸⁶ James E. Harvey to Lincoln, Philadelphia, 8 November 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

⁸⁷ Thaddeus Stevens to Simon Stevens, Washington, February 10, Palmer, ed., Papers of Stevens, 1:207.

⁸⁸ Swett to Lincoln, Washington, 8 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. A week later, Swett reported that “Cameron objects very decidedly to the appointment of Dayton.” Same to same, 14

In Washington, opponents of Cameron besieged Lincoln. On February 26, John Hay reported that if the president-elect “was in any respect an object of sympathy while on his travels, he is certainly doubly so now. He has exchanged the minor tribulations of hand-shaking and speech-making for the graver woes which attach to the martyr toasted between two fires. The conservatives have chiefly had the presidential ear since the unexpected arrival last Saturday morning. Last night a deputation of the straight-outs had an interview with him, their rumored object being to defeat the appointment of Gen. Cameron to the cabinet.”⁸⁹

That visit may have been the one during which Thaddeus Stevens and several other members of Congress protested against Cameron, whom Stevens called “a man destitute of honor and honesty” who would “make whatever department he may occupy a den of thieves.”⁹⁰

The president-elect asked the Great Commoner, “You don’t mean to say you think Cameron would steal?”

“No, I don’t think he would steal a red-hot stove.”

When Lincoln repeated this quip to Cameron, the Chief was so incensed that he refused to speak to Stevens.

The Lancaster congressman asked why Lincoln had repeated his hostile remark to Cameron. “I thought it was a good joke and didn’t think it would make him mad,” replied the president-elect.

January 1861, ibid.

⁸⁹ Washington correspondence by John Hay, 26 February, New York World, 28 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 45.

⁹⁰ Stevens to Washburne, Washington, 19 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Stevens to Chase, Washington, 3 February 1861, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia; Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 2nd session, 1861-62 (28 April 1862).

“Well, he is very mad and made me promise to retract. I will now do so. I believe I told you he would not steal a red-hot stove. I will now take that back.”⁹¹

When some senators urged him to dump Seward, Lincoln expressed resentment against “the assumption which such a protest implies that he will be unduly under the influence of any individual among his advisers.”⁹² Greeley, who came to Washington to lobby against the Seward-Weed faction, reported on February 28 that the president-elect “is honest as the sun, and means to be true and faithful; but he is in the web of very cunning spiders and cannot work out if he would,” thus giving the “compromisers full swing.”⁹³ But Seward hardly felt as if he had mastered the president-elect. He reported that Lincoln was “very cordial and kind toward me – simple, natural, and agreeable.” Among other things, the president-elect said, “One part of the business, Governor Seward, I think I shall leave almost entirely in your hands; that is, the dealing with those foreign nations and their governments.”⁹⁴ But the New Yorker was not entirely happy with his attempts to move Lincoln toward compromise. When asked by Charles Francis Adams if “things were right at head quarters,” the Seward promptly answered: “No, they were not wrong, but scarcely quite right.”⁹⁵

On February 28 and March 1, Lincoln met with Cameron, who later recalled that “he asked me what I wanted – told him I didn’t want anything. He might take the offices and keep them. I spoke pretty sharp. He offered to make me Atty. Genl. or give me the

⁹¹ Samuel W. McCall, Thaddeus Stevens (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1909), 311-12.

⁹² Washington correspondence by John Hay, 26 February, New York World, 28 February 1861, Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist, 45.

⁹³ Greeley to Beman Brockway, Washington, 28 February 1861, Greeley Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹⁴ Frederick W. Seward, William H. Seward: An Autobiography from 1801 to 1834 (3 vols.; New York: Derby and Miller, 1891), 2:511.

⁹⁵ Charles Francis Adams diary, 28 February 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Interior. I told him I was no lawyer; I didn't want anything if he couldn't give me what he had offered [in Springfield, namely the portfolio of either the treasury or the war department]."⁹⁶ Since Lincoln had already decided to name Chase secretary of the treasury, he gave Cameron the war department post.⁹⁷

As it turned out, the appointment was one of Lincoln's greatest mistakes. If Pennsylvania Republicans had been able to unite on anyone else, or if the Chief's opponents had not caved in, or if McClure had submitted documents proving Cameron's lack of integrity, or if Cameron had come from a less important state, or if he had not been a candidate for president at the Chicago Convention, or if David Davis and Leonard Swett had not led the Pennsylvanians at the Chicago Convention to believe that they would have a place in the cabinet, Lincoln might have avoided naming a man "whose very name stinks in the nostrils of the people for his corruption" (in Lincoln's own words).⁹⁸ By giving him a cabinet seat, Lincoln probably felt the way he did when he named David P. Holloway commissioner of patents. To George W. Julian, who denounced Holloway "an incompetent and untrustworthy man," Lincoln replied: "There is much force in what you say, but, in the balancing of matters, I guess I shall have to

⁹⁶ Cameron interviewed by Nicolay, 20 February 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 42. One press account stated that Cameron insisted on the treasury portfolio. Washington correspondence, 1 March, Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette, 2 March 1861. Another report indicated that he was offered the Interior Department at a meeting on February 27 and the War Department on March 1. Washington correspondence, 3 March, New York Tribune, 4 March 1861. Many years later Hiram Barney recalled Lincoln telling him that Cameron "says I promised him the Treasury, but I never did[.]" Barney's statement to an anonymous interviewer, undated memorandum, Barney Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California, in Allan Nevins, "Hiram Barney and Lincoln: Three Unpublished Documents," Huntington Library Quarterly 26 (1962): 3.

⁹⁷ At their first interview, Cameron reportedly told Lincoln he would settle for nothing but the treasury department portfolio. At the second interview, he relented and took the war department job. Washington correspondence, 1 March, New York Tribune, 2 March 1861.

⁹⁸ J. K. Morehead, interviewed by John G. Nicolay, Washington, 12 and 13 May 1880, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 41.

appoint him.”⁹⁹ Lincoln told his friend James C. Conkling that though he was personally opposed to appointing Cameron because of his unsavory reputation, he had received a petition signed by many members of the Pennsylvania state legislature, whose opinion he could not safely ignore: “It is highly important that the influence of so large and powerful a State as Pennsylvania should be on the side of the Government, and I must waive my private feelings for the public good.”¹⁰⁰

Cameron’s selection pleased Seward. (Montgomery Blair asserted that “Cameron was brought into the cabinet by Seward.”)¹⁰¹ But that was not enough for the New York senator, who wanted as colleagues former Whigs like Charles Francis Adams, Caleb B. Smith, and Henry Winter Davis, all soft-liners on secession. Lincoln did name Smith as secretary of the interior in preference to the thirty-six-year-old Schuyler Colfax, explaining to the latter that “I had partly made up my mind in favor of Mr. Smith – not conclusively of course – before your name was mentioned in that connection. When you were brought forward I said ‘Colfax is a young man – is already in position – is running a brilliant career, and is sure of a bright future in any event.’ ‘With Smith, it is now or never.’”¹⁰² (In time, Lincoln came to regard Colfax as “a little intriguer, – plausible, aspiring beyond his capacity, and not trustworthy.”)¹⁰³ Smith, who unlike Colfax aggressively campaigned for a cabinet seat, proved to be a mediocre secretary, but

⁹⁹ George W. Julian, Political Recollections, 1840 to 1872 (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, 1884), 183. Holloway, editor of the Richmond Palladium, and the combative Julian had been bitter rivals in Indiana. Patrick W. Riddleberger, George Washington Julian, Radical Republican: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Politics and Reform (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1966), 31-34.

¹⁰⁰ James C. Conkling to the editor, Springfield, 4 October, Chicago Tribune, 8 October 1879.

¹⁰¹ Blair to Welles, Washington, 22 January 1874, Lincoln Collection, Yale University.

¹⁰² Lincoln to Colfax, Washington, 8 March 1861, Roy P. Basler et al., eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 4:278.

¹⁰³ Howard K. Beale and Alan W. Brownsword, eds., Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson (3 vols.; New York, W.W. Norton, 1960), 1:481 (entry for December 1863).

Indiana had been promised a seat in the cabinet and no other Hoosier commanded as much home support as he did.

Seward was not pleased with the remaining choices of former Democrats Gideon Welles for secretary of the navy, Montgomery Blair as postmaster general, and most especially Salmon P. Chase as treasury secretary. Lincoln favored Blair in part because of the influence of his family, especially his father, Francis P. Blair, Sr. The president-elect read that old man his inaugural address and asked for suggestions.¹⁰⁴ Lincoln explained that “it was necessary to have Southern men & men of Democratic antecedents” and that Blair “fulfilled both requirements.”¹⁰⁵ Leading Maryland Republicans like Governor Thomas Hicks assured Lincoln that Henry Winter Davis was unacceptable to Union men there.¹⁰⁶

Welles, a newspaper editor and leader of the Connecticut Republican party, proved to be a good choice, though his appearance made him the object of ridicule. Charles A. Dana recalled that the navy secretary “was a curious-looking man: he wore a wig which was parted in the middle, the hair falling down on each side; and it was from his peculiar appearance, I have always thought, that the idea that he was an old fogy originated.” Massachusetts Governor John A. Andrew called him “that old Mormon deacon.” To the public he was “Father Welles,” and Lincoln referred to him as “Grandfather Welles.” Undeniably there was a “fossiliferous” quality to Welles, which prompted the New York Herald to deem him a “fossil almost from the Silurian period.”

¹⁰⁴ William Ernest Smith, The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1933), 1:516.

¹⁰⁵ Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, St. Louis, n.d. [13 December 1860], Blair-Lee Family Papers, Princeton University.

¹⁰⁶ Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis Du Pont, [Washington], 12 March 1861, transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

Lincoln liked to tell a joke about Welles: “when asked to personate the grandmother of a dying sailor,” the navy secretary begged off, saying “that he was busy examining the model of Noah’s ark.” But, Dana noted, the “patient, laborious, and intelligent” Welles “was a very wise, strong man. There was nothing decorative about him; there was no noise in the street when he went along; but he understood his duty, and did it efficiently, continually, and unvaryingly.”¹⁰⁷ He was familiar with the navy department, in which he had served as chief of the bureau of provisions and clothing during the Mexican War.

Montgomery Blair, who acquired a reputation as “the meanest man in the whole government,” was “awkward, shy, homely and repellent,” according to journalist Noah Brooks.¹⁰⁸ Another newspaperman, William Howard Russell of the London Times, was more charitable, describing the postmaster general as a man of great influence and determination. “He is a tall, lean man, with a hard, Scotch, practical looking head,” which served as “an anvil for ideas to be hammered on. His eyes are small and deeply set, and have a rat-like expression and he speaks with caution, as though he weighed every word before he uttered it.”¹⁰⁹ To placate Henry Winter Davis, Lincoln gave him control of the Maryland patronage.¹¹⁰

In deciding between Cameron and Chase for the treasury department, Lincoln

¹⁰⁷ New York Herald, n.d., clipping in notebook, Gideon Welles Papers, Connecticut Historical Society; Charles A. Dana, Recollections of the Civil War: With the Leaders at Washington and in the Field in the Sixties (New York: D. Appleton, 1898), 170; Washington correspondence by Noah Brooks, 2 May, Sacramento Daily Union, 27 May 1863, in Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 48.

¹⁰⁸ Noah Brooks to George Witherle, Washington, 23 December 1863, in Burlingame, ed., Lincoln Observed, 97-98.

¹⁰⁹ William H. Russell, My Diary North and South (Boston: T.O.H.P. Burnham, 1863), 24 (entry for 28 March 1861).

¹¹⁰ A. G. Riddle, Recollections of War Times: Reminiscences of Men and Events in Washington, 1860-1865 (New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1895), 276.

polled the Republican senators, who favored the latter.¹¹¹ Southerners regarded Chase’s appointment as a declaration of war against their region. They and Northern conservatives lobbied furiously against the Ohioan until the last minute.¹¹² On February 24, Lincoln told John Z. Goodrich that “personally he preferred Chase for the Treasury Department to any other man – but added that he was very much embarrassed by the strong opposition to him by certain politicians in Ohio, Wade included.”¹¹³ Horace Greeley – who had been pressuring Lincoln to reject Cameron and to appoint Schuyler Colfax, Thaddeus Stevens, and Chase – was jubilant.¹¹⁴ After the cabinet choices were announced, the Tribune editor crowed to a friend: “we did, by desperate fighting, succeed in getting four honest and capable men into the Cabinet – by a fight that you never saw equaled in intensity and duration. Gov. Chase, the ablest Republican living, who (so Gen. Dix said) was almost indispensable to the Treasury, got it at last.” Mrs. Lincoln evidently opposed the Ohioan, for Greeley said that Chase’s appointment was obtained “by the determined [pluck?] and clear-headed sagacity of Old Abe himself, powerfully backed by Hamlin, who is a jewel. All the Kitchen Cabinet, including the female President, were dead against him, while the ‘Border States’ swore they would go out if he were put it in.”¹¹⁵ According to a close friend of Mrs. Lincoln, her “hostility to Mr. Chase was very bitter. She claimed that he was a selfish politician instead of a true patriot, and warned

Comment [C1]:

¹¹¹ Washington correspondence, 26 February, New York Tribune, 27 February 1861.

¹¹² Thomas J. McCormack, ed., Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896 (2 vols.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1909), 2:116-17.

¹¹³ Goodrich to John A. Andrew, Washington, 25 February 1861, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹¹⁴ Springfield correspondence, 5 February, New York Herald, 6 February 1861.

¹¹⁵ Greeley to Beman Brockway, New York, 12 March 1861, Greeley Papers, Library of Congress. Unaccountably, James G. Randall transcribed “female President” as “Senate President.” J. G. Randall, Lincoln the President (4 vols.; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1945-55), 1:313.

Mr. Lincoln not to trust him too far.”¹¹⁶

(While Mrs. Lincoln could be sharp-tongued about men like Chase, some observers had equally unflattering things to say about her. A New York lawyer, Charles E. Strong, thought her “a very vulgar old woman.” His cousin and partner, George Templeton Strong, shared that view, calling her “Underbred, weak, and vain.”)¹¹⁷

Lincoln was “much depressed” and “greatly annoyed” by the long struggle over the cabinet, which culminated on the night of March 2. The president-elect, “very much agitated,” told his numerous callers, including Sewardites ferociously resisting the appointment of Chase and Blair, “it is evident that some one must take the responsibility of these appointments, and I will do it. My Cabinet is completed. The positions are not all definitely assigned, and will not be until I announce them privately to the gentlemen whom I have selected as my Constitutional advisers.”¹¹⁸ To Marylanders protesting against Blair, Lincoln was equally emphatic: “I have weighed the matter – I have been pulled this way and that way – I have poised the scales, and it is my province to determine, and I am now going to be master.”¹¹⁹ When Hamlin bluntly asked him “whether the Administration was going to be ‘a Seward or a Lincoln Administration,’” the president-elect emphatically answered that it would be the latter.¹²⁰ (For good reason a journalist remarked that “Lincoln is found to possess a will of his own. He is as firm as

¹¹⁶ Keckley, Behind the Scenes, 128. On the friendship of Mary Lincoln and Mrs. Keckly, see Jennifer Fleishner, Mrs. Lincoln and Mrs. Keckly: The Remarkable Story of the Friendship between a First Lady and a Former Slave (New York: Broadway Books, 2003).

¹¹⁷ Letter from Charles Strong to George Templeton Strong, paraphrased in Allan Nevins and Milton Halsey Thomas, eds., The Diary of George Templeton Strong, 1835-1875 (4 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1952), 3:104 (entry for 27 February 1861); entry for 11 September 1862, ibid., 3:255.

¹¹⁸ Washington correspondence, 28 February and 3 March, New York Times, 1 and 4 March 1861.

¹¹⁹ Washington correspondence, 3 March, Philadelphia Inquirer, 4 March 1861.

¹²⁰ Mark Howard to Gideon Welles, Washington, 25 February 1861, Welles Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

a rock when he once thinks he is right.”)¹²¹

Furious at Lincoln’s choices, Seward complained “that he had not been consulted as was usual in the formation of the Cabinet, that he understood Chase had been assigned to the Treasury, that there were differences between himself and Chase which rendered it impossible for them to act in harmony, that the Cabinet ought, as General Jackson said, to be a unit. Under these circumstances and with his conviction of duty and what was due to himself, he must insist on the excluding of Mr. Chase if he, Seward, remained.” The president-elect “expressed his surprise after all that had taken place and with the great trouble on his hands, that he should be met with such a demand on this late day.” He asked the Sage of Auburn to think the matter over.¹²² The next day, Seward formalized his refusal in a letter to the president-elect: “Circumstances which have occurred since I expressed to you in December last my willingness to accept the office of Secretary of State seem to me to render it my duty to ask leave to withdraw that consent. Tendering to you my best wishes for the success of your administration with my sincere and grateful acknowledgements of all your acts of kindness and confidence, towards me I remain, very respectfully.”¹²³

To strengthen his bid for dominance, Seward enlisted the aid of Winfield Scott, who was under his spell.¹²⁴ On March 3, the general wrote Seward a letter, doubtless at

¹²¹ Washington correspondence by Sigma, 4 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 6 March 1861.

¹²² Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:391-92 (3 December 1865). Lincoln told this to Fogg, who subsequently told it to Welles. On March 5, Fogg had called on Lincoln to ask about Chase. On December 27, Seward had complained to Charles Francis Adams that he had supposed when Lincoln offered him the state department portfolio that he “would have consulted him upon the selections of the colleagues with whom he was to act.” Charles Francis Adams diary, 27 December 1860, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹²³ Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 2 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

¹²⁴ Frederic Bancroft, The Life of William H. Seward (2 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900), 2:95, 124-25.

the request of the New Yorker, who passed it along to Lincoln. In it Scott outlined four options that the new president could choose among. The first, and most plausible, was to abandon the Republican party in favor “a new designation – the Union party,” and to “adopt the conciliatory measures proposed by Mr. Crittenden, or the Peace convention.” If Lincoln were to endorse this Sewardian program, Scott predicted, “we shall have no new case of secession; but, on the contrary, an early return of many, if not all the states which have already broken off from the Union, without some equally benign measure, the remaining slave holding states will, probably, join the Montgomery confederacy in less than sixty days, when this city – being included in a foreign country – would require a permanent Garrison of at least 35,000 troops to protect the Government within it.” The second option was to collect “the duties on foreign goods outside the ports of which this Government has lost the command, or close such posts by acts of congress, & blockade them.” The third was to raise an army of 300,000, spend \$250,000,000, and conquer the seceding states, which would then become “devastated provinces – not to be brought into harmony with their conquerors; but to be held, for generations, by heavy garrisons – at an expense quadruple the net duties or taxes which it would be possible to extract from them – followed by a Protector or an Emperor.” The fourth and final option was for Lincoln to say to the Deep South: “wayward sisters, depart in peace!”¹²⁵

Seward overplayed his hand. Perhaps he had gotten a swelled head after persuading Lincoln to soften his hard-line stance. Before leaving Springfield, the president-elect had expressed a willingness to accept the Seward-Adams-Corwin New Mexico Compromise. Since arriving in Washington, he had approved passage of the

¹²⁵ Winfield Scott to William H. Seward, 3 March 1861, enclosed in Seward to Lincoln, 4 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

Guthrie plan by the Peace Conference; he had perhaps even maneuvered behind the scenes to have that plan adopted by the delegates; he may have helped defeat a force bill; he definitely helped squelch a bill authorizing the offshore collection of custom duties; he had asked Seward's advice in drafting his inaugural address and had followed most of his suggestions; at Browning's urging he had omitted from that address the threat to repossess federal property in the seceding states; and he had appointed Cameron, a leading advocate of compromise, to the cabinet. He made conciliatory public remarks, including a statement on February 27 to Mayor James G. Berret of Washington. Addressing slaveholders in general as well as the mayor, Lincoln said: "I think very much of the ill feeling that has existed and still exists between the people of the section from whence I came and the people here, is owing to a misunderstanding between each other which unhappily prevails. I therefore avail myself of this opportunity to assure you, Mr. Mayor, and all the gentlemen present, that I have not now, and never have had, any other than as kindly feelings towards you as to the people of my own section. I have not now, and never have had, any disposition to treat you in any respect otherwise than as my own neighbors. I have not now any purpose to withhold from you any of the benefits of the constitution, under any circumstances, that I would not feel myself constrained to withhold from my own neighbors; and I hope, in a word, when we shall become better acquainted—and I say it with great confidence – we shall like each other the more."¹²⁶ Just why Lincoln became more conciliatory in the week before his inauguration is not entirely clear, but Seward's counsel surely played an important role in effecting that

¹²⁶ Reply to Mayor James G. Berret at Washington, D.C., 27 February 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:246-47.

transformation.¹²⁷ In addition, the president-elect became more aware of the depth of secessionist feeling in the Upper South and Border States, where Unionism was more conditional than he had understood while in Springfield.

Realizing that Seward meant to dominate him the way he had dominated President Taylor, Lincoln decided to call the senator's bluff by letting it be known that he might appoint someone else to head the state department and name the New Yorker minister to Great Britain. Rumors spread quickly, including speculation that Chase was to be dropped.¹²⁸ When Norman B. Judd heard that Henry Winter Davis rather than Montgomery Blair would become postmaster general, he asked Lincoln about this alteration in the reported cabinet slate. "Judd," came the reply, which clearly referred to Seward, "I told a man at eleven o'clock last night that if this slate broke again it would break at the head."¹²⁹ The man he took into his confidence was doubtless George G. Fogg, to whom Lincoln said: "We must give up both Seward and Chase, I reckon; and I have drawn up here a list of the cabinet, leaving them both out." The new slate included William L. Dayton as secretary of state, John C. Frémont as secretary of war, and a New York opponent of Seward as secretary of the treasury. "I am sending this to Mr. Weed,"

¹²⁷ Some historians regard Seward's proffered resignation as a desperate measure designed to force Lincoln to abandon his intransigent opposition to compromise. See Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 254-55; Sowler, "Moderate Republicans," 449-54. This seems misguided, for the president-elect had been softening that opposition ever since his arrival in the nation's capital a week earlier. Sowler states that prior to March 4, "Lincoln did not inform Seward of the last-minute changes in the [inaugural] address." (p.455) But Charles Francis Adams, Jr., wrote that on March 3, Seward informed him that "Lincoln that day had shown to him his inaugural address, and had consulted with him in regard to it." Charles Francis Adams, Jr., to Albert L. Bacheller, Boston, 20 January 1896, Wyles Collection, University of California at Santa Barbara. Adams's diary entry for March 3 tends to support this recollection: "Referring to the coming inaugural, he [Seward] remarked that he had been reading it, and that while it would satisfy the whole country, it more than covered all his [Seward's] heresies." Adams, Autobiography, 95. The New York Times reported that on the night of March 2, Lincoln and Seward jointly revised the inaugural. Washington correspondence, 3 March, New York Times, 4 March 1861.

¹²⁸ Baringer, House Dividing, 326-29.

¹²⁹ Norman B. Judd, interviewed by John G. Nicolay, Washington, 28 February 1876, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 47.

Lincoln remarked.¹³⁰ To Seward he sent a different message, written as he was leaving the hotel to deliver his inaugural address: “Your note of the 2nd. inst. asking to withdraw your acceptance of my invitation to take charge of the State Department, was duly received. It is the subject of most painful solicitude with me; and I feel constrained to beg that you will countermand the withdrawal. The public interest, I think, demands that you should; and my personal feelings are deeply inlisted in the same direction. Please consider, and answer by 9 o'clock, A.M. to-morrow.”¹³¹

Seward, aware that he had lost his gamble, capitulated. After conferring with the president on the night of inauguration day, he withdrew his letter of March 2.¹³² Lincoln gave the senator “to understand that whatever others might say or do, they two would not disagree but were friends.”¹³³ To his wife, Seward explained that Lincoln was “determined that he will have a compound Cabinet; and that it shall be peaceful, and even permanent. I was at one time on the point of refusing – nay, I did refuse, for a time to hazard myself in the experiment. But a distracted country appeared before me; and I withdrew from that position. I believe I can endure as much as any one; and may be that I

¹³⁰ F. B. Sanborn, Recollections of Seventy Years (2 vols.; Boston: R. G. Badger, 1909), 1:26-27. Shortly before he died in 1881, Fogg told this to Frank Sanborn, whose brother was a good friend of Fogg. Fogg related a similar story to Gideon Welles. A much more detailed version of this Dayton-for-Seward episode can be found in the anonymous “Diary of a Public Man,” which many historians and biographers have relied on. F. Lauriston Bullard, ed., The Diary of a Public Man: An Intimate View of the National Administration, December 28, 1860 to March 15, 1861 (Chicago: Abraham Lincoln Book Shop, 1945). It is, however, a highly suspect source. See Frank Maloy Anderson, The Mystery of a Public Man: A Historical Detective Story (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1948). But see also Roy N. Lokken, “Has the Mystery of ‘A Public Man’ Been Solved?” Mississippi Valley Historical Review 40 (1953): 419-40; Lately Thomas, Sam Ward: King of the Lobby (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1965); and Benjamin M. Price to Norman Cousins, Chicago, 9 April 1949, box 18, J. G. Randall Papers, Library of Congress.

¹³¹ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:273.

¹³² Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 5 March 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester.

¹³³ On March 27, Weed told this to John Bigelow. John Bigelow diary, 27 March 1861, New York Public Library.

can endure enough to make the experiment successful. At all events I did not dare to go home, or to England, and leave the country to chance.”¹³⁴

Though thwarted on this opening trick, Seward had not yet learned that Lincoln meant to control his own administration. In time, that lesson would sink in, but only after he issued another dramatic challenge to presidential authority.

Lincoln had to call Chase’s bluff as well as Seward’s. Assuming that the Ohioan would accept the treasury portfolio, he had not consulted him about the matter since arriving in Washington. On March 6, when the names of all cabinet members were submitted to the senate, the hypersensitive Chase explained to Lincoln his reluctance to accept the post. As Chase later recalled, the president “referred to the embarrassment my declination would occasion him,” leading Chase to promise to reconsider. When word of this conversation leaked out, Chase “was immediately pressed by the most urgent remonstrances not to decline.”¹³⁵ After Lincoln had Frank Blair sound out Congressman John Sherman about becoming treasury secretary, and after rumors spread that Chase would be named minister to England, Ohioans opposed to Chase reversed course and urged Lincoln to name him.¹³⁶ Finally Chase yielded.

Lincoln’s “compound cabinet” did not please all Republicans. Charles Francis Adams called it a “motley mixture, containing one statesman, one politician, two jobbers,

¹³⁴ Seward to his wife, Washington, 8 March 1861, Seward, Seward at Washington, 2:518. According to Weed, the day before the inauguration “Lincoln sent for Mr. Seward and told him that he could not get on without his help, and begged him therefore to retain the place, or, to use his own language, to ‘hold on.’ Mr. Seward asked until the following day for reflection, when he accepted.” John Bigelow, Retrospections of an Active Life (5 vols.; New York: Baker & Taylor, 1909-13), 1:339.

¹³⁵ Letter from Chase to John T. Trowbridge, n.p., n.d., J. W. Schuckers, The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase, United States Senator and Governor of Ohio, Secretary of the Treasury and Chief-justice of the United States (New York: D. Appleton, 1874), 207.

¹³⁶ John Sherman, interviewed by John G. Nicolay, Washington, 10 October 1878, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 79-80; Washington correspondence, 6 March, Chicago Tribune, 11 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 3 March, New York Herald, 4 March 1861.

one intriguer, and two respectable old gentlemen.”¹³⁷ The sardonic Radical Thaddeus Stevens said it consisted “of an assortment of rivals whom the President appointed from courtesy, one stump-speaker from Indiana, and two representatives of the Blair family.”¹³⁸ In fact, Lincoln chose his four competitors for the presidential nomination not as an act of courtesy but to strengthen his administration by having the most prominent leaders of the party’s factions, as well as the most important regions, represented.

Lincoln was careful to balance the cabinet with former Whigs and former Democrats. When Weed protested that there were four of the latter and only three of the former, Lincoln replied that he had been a Whig and would be attending cabinet meetings. (He might also have pointed out that Cameron had hardly been a dyed-in-the-wool Democrat. The New York Herald satirically – and aptly – labeled him a “Democratic Know Nothing Republican Conservative.”)¹³⁹

Former Congressman David K. Cartter of Ohio asked Lincoln: “Do you not think the elements of the Cabinet are too strong and in some respects too conflicting?” He replied: “It may be so, but I think they will neutralize each other.”¹⁴⁰

To Border State observers, the cabinet seemed acceptably “moderate and conciliatory in complexion.”¹⁴¹

Meanwhile Congress, after debating compromise measures for three months, finally passed a measure designed to placate the South: the Adams-Corwin-Seward

¹³⁷ Charles Francis Adams diary, 5 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹³⁸ James G. Blaine, Twenty Years of Congress: From Lincoln to Garfield (2 vols.; Norwich, Connecticut: Henry Bill, 1884-86), 1:286.

¹³⁹ New York Herald, 28 June 1858.

¹⁴⁰ Reminiscences of George B. Loring, New York Tribune, 9 August 1885.

¹⁴¹ Louisville Journal, n.d., copied in the Ohio State Journal (Columbus), 11 March 1861.

amendment to the Constitution guaranteeing slavery in the states where it already existed. On February 27, the House defeated that measure, but the following day, when seven more Republicans supported it, the amendment obtained the requisite two-thirds majority. At 4 a.m. of inauguration day, March 4, this Thirteenth Amendment squeaked through the senate with a bare two-thirds majority (24-12).¹⁴² On the night of the 3rd, Lincoln may have gone to the Capitol and lobbied in favor of the measure without knowing its precise details.¹⁴³ It read: “No amendment shall ever be made to the Constitution which will authorize or give to Congress the power to abolish or interfere, within any State, with the domestic institutions thereof, including that of persons held to labor or service by the laws of said State.”¹⁴⁴ Henry Adams noted that it required “some careful manipulation, as well as the direct influence of the new President,” to obtain passage.¹⁴⁵ A few days earlier, Trumbull and Seward had introduced a resolution, probably with Lincoln’s

¹⁴² Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 301; Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 255; Johannsen, Douglas, 835-39. The Republicans split, with eight in favor and twelve opposed. James E. Harvey reported that it “is very well known that Mr. Lincoln advised his Republican friends in the Senate to vote for the resolution declaring that Congress had no power to interfere with the domestic institutions of the States, which is designed as an amendment to the Constitution.” Washington correspondence by “Independent” [James E. Harvey], 7 March, Philadelphia North American and United States Gazette, 8 March 1861.

¹⁴³ A journalist wrote that Lincoln “advised the Republicans of his state” to support the amendment. Washington correspondence, 1 March, New York Tribune, 2 March 1861. Yet the three Illinois Republicans who voted against the amendment the first time also did so upon reconsideration. A historian asserted that “Corwin had gone over the matter with Lincoln after his arrival, and they decided to offer the constitutional amendment concocted by the Committee of Thirty-three.” Roy F. Nichols, Disruption of American Democracy (New York: Macmillan, 1948), 484.

¹⁴⁴ Washington correspondence, 4 March, Philadelphia Inquirer, 5 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 26 February, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 2 March 1861.

¹⁴⁵ Adams, “The Great Secession Winter,” in Henry Adams, The Great Secession Winter of 1860-61, and Other Essays, ed. George Hochfield (New York: Sagamore Press, 1958), 27. Charles Francis Adams wrote that “the Senate by an extra effort stimulated as was whispered by a hint from him [Lincoln] passed the amendment by just the requisite proportion of votes.” Charles Francis Adams diary, 4 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. The New York Tribune reported that it was “known that Mr. Lincoln favored its passage” and that there “were votes enough present to have defeated it if there had been any such disposition.” Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Tribune, 5 March 1861.

approval, urging states to issue a call for a national constitutional convention.¹⁴⁶

In preliminary drafts of his inaugural address, Lincoln had expressed no enthusiasm for changes to the Constitution. In his final revision, he alluded to the freshly-passed amendment and also endorsed Seward's suggestion that a national convention be held to consider other alterations to the document: "I can not be ignorant of the fact that many worthy, and patriotic citizens are desirous of having the national constitution amended. While I make no recommendation of amendments, I fully recognize the rightful authority of the people over the whole subject, to be exercised in either of the modes prescribed in the instrument itself; and I should, under existing circumstances, favor, rather than oppose, a fair opportunity being afforded the people to act upon it. I will venture to add that, to me, the Convention mode seems preferable, in that it allows amendments to originate with the people themselves, instead of only permitting them to take, or reject, propositions, originated by others, not especially chosen for the purpose, and which might not be precisely such, as they would wish to either accept or refuse. I understand a proposed amendment to the constitution which amendment, however, I have not seen, has passed Congress, to the effect that the federal government, shall never interfere with the domestic institutions of the States, including that of persons held to service. To avoid misconstruction of what I have said, I depart from my purpose not to speak of particular amendments, so far as to say that, holding such a provision to now be implied Constitutional law, I have no objection to it's being made express, and irrevocable."

Those two concessions were, the journalist James Shepherd Pike maintained, "as

¹⁴⁶ Congressional Globe, 36th Congress, 2nd session, 1270 (28 February 1861).

much as the Republicans can grant without entering upon the backing-down policy.”¹⁴⁷ Ten months later, when Ohio Congressman John A. Bingham mentioned this last-minute insertion, Lincoln said: “It is extraordinary that I should have made such statements in my Inaugural. Are you not mistaken about this?” To Bingham it seemed as if the president “felt that the proposed Amendment had not been correctly reported to him, and that some one had blundered. He reproached no one, nor did he intimate how or by whose agency this passage came to be in the Inaugural Address.”¹⁴⁸ Seward was probably Lincoln’s (mis)informant.

Lincoln’s willingness to support such an amendment was yet another example of his desire to appear accommodating to both the South and to moderate Republicans like Seward, to show that he was not inflexible and stubborn (except with regard to slavery expansion and secession), and to appear reasonable. He probably thought an unamendable amendment was a contradiction in terms as well as unconstitutional, and that the amendment (as he virtually stated in the inaugural) was a tautology, reaffirming what was already guaranteed in the Constitution. In all likelihood, he regarded his support of the amendment as little more than a sop to the Sewardites and to public opinion in the Upper South and Border States. He doubtless thought that the amendment had little chance of being adopted by three-quarters of the states.

Other revisions, made largely at Seward’s suggestion, added to the conciliatory tone created by this endorsement of a Thirteenth Amendment. (Ironically, a very different Thirteenth Amendment would be adopted in 1865 abolishing slavery instead of

¹⁴⁷ Washington correspondence by Pike, 28 February, New York Tribune, 1 March 1861.

¹⁴⁸ John A. Bingham, “Abraham Lincoln,” speech delivered at Cadiz, Ohio, 15 April 1886, The Current (Chicago), 24 April 1886, 282.

guaranteeing its existence.) A good example is Lincoln's reference to secession ordinances as "revolutionary" rather than "treasonable." More striking was Seward's recommendation about the conclusion of the address, which in its original form posed a bellicose challenge to the secessionists: "In your hands, my dissatisfied fellow countrymen, and not in mine, is the momentous issue of civil war. The government will not assail you, unless you first assail it. You can have no conflict, without being yourselves the aggressors. You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to 'preserve, protect and defend' it. With you, and not with me, is the solemn question of 'Shall it be peace, or a sword?'" Lincoln took Seward's advice to omit the phrase "unless you first assail it" and to replace the ominous final sentence with a lyrical appeal to sectional fraternity. The senator proposed the following language, which called to mind James Madison's 14th Federalist Paper: "I close. We are not we must not be aliens or enemies but fellow countrymen and brethren. Although passion has strained our bonds of affection too hardly they must not be broken – they will not, I am sure they will not be broken. The mystic chords which proceeding from every battle field and patriot so many patriot graves bind pass through all the hearts and hearths all the hearths in this broad continent of ours will yet again harmonize in their ancient music when touched as they surely breathed upon again by the better angel guardian angel of the nation." (This was a variation on passages from Seward's senate speech of February 29, 1860, when he sought to burnish his credentials as a moderate.)

Like a rhetorical alchemist, Lincoln transformed those leaden words into a golden prose-poem: "I am loth to close. We are not enemies, but friends. We must not be

enemies. Though passion may have strained, it must not break our bonds of affection. The mystic chords of memory, stretching from every battlefield, and patriot grave, to every living heart and hearthstone, all over this broad land, will yet swell the chorus of the Union, when again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature.”¹⁴⁹ (Some Southerners derided this eloquent passage as “sophomoric.”)¹⁵⁰

Lincoln did not take all of Seward’s suggestions. Although he softened the passage dealing with seized federal installations by dropping the phrase “to reclaim the public property and places which have fallen” – that was Browning’s advice as well as Seward’s – he did say the “power confided to me, will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property, and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts; but beyond what may be necessary for these objects, there will be no invasion – no using of force against, or among the people anywhere.” This was tougher than Seward’s proposed language: “The power confided to me shall be used indeed with efficacy, but also with discretion in every case and exigency according to the circumstances actually existing, and with a view and a hope of a peaceful solution of the national troubles and the restoration of fraternal sympathies and affections. There are in this government as in every other, emergencies where the exercise of power lawful in itself is less certain to secure the just ends of administration than a temporary forbearance from it, with reliance on the voluntary though delayed acquiescence of the people in the laws which have been made by themselves and for their own benefit. I shall not lose sight

¹⁴⁹ The term “better Angel” occurs in Dickens’s *David Copperfield*. Charles Dickens, The Personal History of David Copperfield, ed. Trevor Blount (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), 436. I am grateful to Fred Bauman of the Library of Congress for calling this to my attention. The parallels between Madison’s language and Seward’s was pointed out by Jay B. Hubbel in “Lincoln’s First Inaugural Address,” American Historical Review 36 (1931): 550-52.

¹⁵⁰ Washington correspondence by Critick, 11 March, Charleston Courier, 14 March 1861.

of this obvious maxim.”¹⁵¹

The passage about holding federal property and collecting revenues did not sit well with Stephen T. Logan, to whom Lincoln read the address shortly before inauguration day. “I told him that the southern people would regard that language as a threat and the result would be war,” Logan recalled. Lincoln demurred: “It is not necessary for me to say to you that I have great respect for your opinion, but the statements you think should be modified were carefully considered by me and the probable consequences as far as I can anticipate them.”¹⁵²

Though not as conciliatory as Seward and Logan would have liked, Lincoln’s address was tough but not bellicose. He would not try to repossess forts, custom houses, post offices, court houses, and other federal facilities, nor would he permit the seizure of any more, such as Fort Sumter in Charleston harbor and Fort Pickens off Pensacola. As for collecting revenues, it was possible to do so aboard ships stationed outside Southern ports. Lincoln did not allude to this offshore option in his address, but in the following weeks he explored that solution as an alternative to having customs officials enforce the law onshore.

Lincoln’s pledge to enforce the laws was softened by his declaration that “Where hostility to the United States, in any interior locality, shall be so great and so universal, as

¹⁵¹ By far the best analysis of the evolution of the first inaugural is Douglas L. Wilson’s characteristically thoughtful discussion in Douglas L. Wilson, Lincoln’s Sword: The Presidency and the Power of Words (New York: Knopf, 2006), 42-70. See also Nicolay and Hay, Lincoln, 3:321-4, and Marie Hochmuth Nichols, “Lincoln’s First Inaugural,” in J. Jeffery Auer, ed., Antislavery and Disunion, 1858-1861: Studies in the Rhetoric of Compromise and Conflict (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 392-414. On the political thought embodied in the inaugural, see the detailed examination in Harry V. Jaffa, A New Birth of Freedom: Abraham Lincoln and the Coming of the Civil War (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2000), 259-355.

¹⁵² Logan, statement to a meeting of the Springfield bar, 15 April 1865, quoted in Charles S. Zane, “Lincoln as I Knew Him,” Sunset Magazine 29 (1912), reprinted in the Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 14 (1921-22): 77-78.

to prevent competent resident citizens from holding the Federal offices, there will be no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people for that object. While the strict legal right may exist in the government to enforce the exercise of these offices, the attempt to do so would be so irritating, and so nearly impracticable with all, that I deem it better to forego, for the time, the uses of such offices.” (Why he specified “interior localities” and thus seemed to exempt coastal areas is a mystery.) Lincoln here referred to the ten states where he had received no votes at all. In a similar gesture of forbearance, he said that the “mails, unless repelled, will continue to be furnished in all parts of the Union.”

The passage about “obnoxious strangers” reminded one observer of the instructions given by Shakespeare’s Dogberry to a watchman: “You shall comprehend all vagrom men; you are to bid any man stand, in the Prince’s name.”

“How if ’a will not stand?”

“Why, then, take no note of him, but let him go, and presently call the rest of the watch together, and thank God you are rid of a knave.”¹⁵³

In dealing with the Fugitive Slave Act, Lincoln was also conciliatory. The statute was constitutional and should be enforced, though he suggested that it might be amended to provide accused runaways greater due process: “in any law upon this subject, ought not all the safeguards of liberty known in civilized and humane jurisprudence to be introduced, so that a free man be not, in any case, surrendered as a slave? And might it not be well, at the same time, to provide by law for the enforcement of that clause in the Constitution which guarranties that ‘The citizens of each State shall be entitled to all

¹⁵³ Rock Island Argus, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 22 March 1861. The passage is from Much Ado About Nothing, act 3, scene 3, lines 25-30.

privileges and immunities of citizens in the several States’?”

Also conciliatory was Lincoln’s reiteration of his oft-stated pledge not to interfere with slavery in the states where it already existed and his failure to stress the inflammatory issue of slavery in the territories.

Alluding indirectly to the Dred Scott decision, Lincoln reiterated arguments he had made four years earlier in response to the Supreme Court’s controversial ruling: “I do not forget the position assumed by some, that constitutional questions are to be decided by the Supreme Court; nor do I deny that such decisions must be binding in any case, upon the parties to a suit, as to the object of that suit, while they are also entitled to a very high respect and consideration, in all paralel cases, by all other departments of the government. And while it is obviously possible that such decision may be erroneous in any given case, still the evil effect following it, being limited to that particular case, with the chance that it may be over-ruled, and never become a precedent for other cases, can better be borne than could the evils of a different practice. At the same time the candid citizen must confess, that if the policy of the government, upon vital questions, affecting the whole people, is to be irrevocably fixed by decisions of the Supreme Court, the instant they are made, in ordinary litigation between parties, in personal actions, the people will have ceased, to be their own rulers, having, to that extent, practically resigned their government, into the hands of that eminent tribunal. Nor is there, in this view, any assault upon the Court, or the judges. It is a duty, from which they may not shrink, to decide cases properly brought before them; and it is no fault of theirs, if others seek to turn their decisions to political purposes.”

Though Lincoln had clearly followed Seward’s advice and softened the hard-line

approach taken in early drafts of his inaugural, he emphatically rejected the doctrine of secession. “I hold that in contemplation of universal law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual.” Therefore no state, “upon its own mere motion,” could legally secede. “I therefore consider that, in view of the constitution and the laws, the Union is unbroken; and, to the extent of my ability, I shall take care, as the constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the states. Doing this I deem to be only a simple duty on my part; and I shall perform it, so far as practicable, unless my rightful masters, the American people, shall withhold the requisite means, or, in some authoritative manner, direct the contrary. I trust this will not be regarded as a menace, but only as the declared purpose of the Union that it will constitutionally defend, and maintain itself. In doing this there needs to be no bloodshed or violence; and there shall be none, unless it be forced upon the national authority.”

Lincoln denied John C. Calhoun’s state-compact theory that secessionists espoused. He maintained with some questionable logic that the Union was older than the states, but that was immaterial, for he argued plausibly that if two or more parties enter into a contract, it can be rescinded only if all of them agree. Moreover, the central point was not what the states were before they ratified the Constitution but what they became after doing so. The states may have been sovereign and independent beforehand, but clearly they were no longer so afterwards.¹⁵⁴ Quite pertinently, Lincoln cited the Constitution’s supremacy clause and the preamble’s reference to forming “a more perfect union,” more perfect than the one established by the Articles of Confederation and

¹⁵⁴ Akhil Reed Amar, “Abraham Lincoln and the American Union,” University of Illinois Law Review 5 (2001): 1109-33; Daniel Farber, Lincoln’s Constitution (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 30-31, 43; Jaffa, A New Birth of Freedom, 256, 269-71.

Perpetual Union. Curiously he did not point to Article IV, section 3 of the Constitution, which stipulates that “no new State shall be formed or erected within the Jurisdiction of any other State; nor any State be formed by the Junction of two or more States, or Parts of States, without the Consent of the Legislatures of the States concerned as well as of Congress.” By inference, it seems logical to conclude that the Framers did not authorize the secession of a state without the permission of all the other states. Lincoln’s constitutional arguments, echoing those put forth by James Madison during the Nullification Crisis thirty years earlier, were sound.¹⁵⁵ He was part of a nationalist tradition expounded by Madison, Alexander Hamilton, John Marshall, Daniel Webster, Joseph Story, James Wilson, and others.

Lincoln offered practical as well as constitutional and historical objections to secession. If states were allowed to withdraw whenever they felt so inclined, chaos would result, leading to anarchy or tyranny. “Plainly, the central idea of secession, is the essence of anarchy. A majority, held in restraint by constitutional checks, and limitations, and always changing easily, with deliberate changes of popular opinions and sentiments, is the only true sovereign of a free people. Whoever rejects it, does, of necessity, fly to anarchy or to despotism. Unanimity is impossible; the rule of a minority, as a permanent arrangement, is wholly inadmissible; so that, rejecting the majority principle, anarchy, or despotism in some form, is all that is left.”

Lincoln pointed out the obvious economic, geographic, and political drawbacks to secession. “Physically speaking, we cannot separate. We cannot remove our respective sections from each other, nor build an impassable wall between them. A husband and

¹⁵⁵ Farber, Lincoln’s Constitution, 70-91.

wife may be divorced, and go out of the presence, and beyond the reach of each other; but the different parts of our country cannot do this. They cannot but remain face to face; and intercourse, either amicable or hostile, must continue between them. Is it possible then to make that intercourse more advantageous, or more satisfactory, after separation than before? Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens, than laws can among friends? Suppose you go to war, you cannot fight always; and when, after much loss on both sides, and no gain on either, you cease fighting, the identical old questions, as to terms of intercourse, are again upon you.” (In conversation Lincoln ridiculed secession as a doctrine based on the premise that “the big tub ought to go into the little one.”)¹⁵⁶

Lincoln was following the advice he had given to Pennsylvania Governor Andrew G. Curtin, who had asked him how to couch his inaugural. The president-elect recommended that Curtin make clear “without passion, threat, or appearance of boasting, but nevertheless, with firmness, the purpose of yourself, and your State to maintain the Union at all hazards.”¹⁵⁷

On the cloudy morning of March 4, Lincoln rose at 5 a.m. and, after eating breakfast and conferring with Seward, put the finishing touches on the address, which his son Robert read aloud to him. Until 11 a.m., he consulted with various other callers, including Bates, Welles, Cameron, Trumbull, David Davis, and Illinois state senator Thomas Marshall.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Alexander Burton Hagner, A Personal Narrative of the Acquaintance of My Father and Myself with Each of the Presidents of the United States (Washington, D.C.: W. F. Roberts, 1915), 46.

¹⁵⁷ Lincoln to Curtin, Springfield, 21 December 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:158.

¹⁵⁸ Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Evening Post, New York Times, New York Herald, 5 March 1861. The New York Times reported that the last-minute tinkering involved this passage: “Where hostility to the United States, in any interior locality, shall be so great and so universal, as to prevent

At dawn, crowds began gathering at the Capitol, where the senate was about to take a three-hour break after its all-night session. Two thousand volunteer soldiers, organized by Colonel Charles P. Stone acting on General Scott's orders, deployed to their posts; 653 regular troops, summoned from distant forts, together with the marines based at the navy yard, supplemented their ranks. Sharpshooters clambered to the roofs of the taller buildings flanking Pennsylvania Avenue, along which police took up positions. Cavalry patrolled the side streets. Plainclothes detectives circulated among the crowd with instructions to arrest for "disorderly conduct" anyone speaking disrespectfully of the new president. The sound of fife and drum filled the air. Flags and banners fluttered in the chill wind. Rumors of bloody doings were bruited about, though the heavy military presence made it unlikely that anyone would disturb the day's ceremony. Colorfully-attired marshals assembled, ready to lead the procession. Gradually the streets became choked with humanity, eagerly awaiting the appearance of the president-elect. Good humor, decorum, order, and enthusiasm prevailed among the people who turned out to witness the event. The Washington National Intelligencer called it "in some respects the most brilliant and imposing pageant ever witnessed in this Capital."¹⁵⁹ Ominously, however, the parade lacked the customary civic groups and political clubs, a sure sign that many Washingtonians did not sympathize with the new president or his party.¹⁶⁰

competent resident citizens from holding the Federal offices, there will be no attempt to force obnoxious strangers among the people for that object. While the strict legal right may exist in the government to enforce the exercise of these offices, the attempt to do so would be so irritating, and so nearly impracticable with all, that I deem it better to forego, for the time, the uses of such offices." Stephen Fiske of the New York Herald called at Willard's early in the morning and learned that "Mr. Lincoln had arisen at sunrise and was revising his inaugural address, because Tom Corwin had used some of its phrases in a speech delivered the day before." Fiske, "When Lincoln Was First Inaugurated," 8.

¹⁵⁹ "The Inauguration," Washington National Intelligencer, 5 March 1861; French, Witness to the Young Republic, ed. Cole and McDonough, 348 (entry for 6 March 1861).

¹⁶⁰ Green, Washington, 1:239.

A handsome open barouche bore President Buchanan, looking rather feeble, to Willard's Hotel, where Lincoln climbed aboard, taking a seat beside the Old Public Functionary.¹⁶¹ The president-elect's bearing was "calm, easy, bland, self-possessed, yet grave and sedate."¹⁶² Accompanying them were Lincoln's good friend, Oregon Senator Edward D. Baker, and Maryland Senator James A. Pearce. As the carriage, surrounded by a double row of cavalry and led by sappers and miners from West Point, rolled over the dusty cobblestones of Pennsylvania Avenue, cheers rang out from the dense crowds lining the sidewalks. The troops escorting the presidential conveyance made it difficult for the 40,000 spectators to catch a glimpse of its occupants. In response to the sociable and animated observations made by Lincoln, who seemed calm and oblivious of the excited crowd, the anxiety-ridden, nerve-wracked Buchanan had little to say and gave the impression that he would have preferred to be elsewhere. Unable to engage Buchanan in conversation, Lincoln then stared at the floor of the carriage absently.¹⁶³ The military escort seemed like guards conveying prisoners to their execution.¹⁶⁴

Arriving at the Capitol at 1:15 p.m., Lincoln and Buchanan descended from their carriage. The weary, sad-faced, white-haired incumbent aroused pity, for he seemed friendless and abandoned.¹⁶⁵ By contrast, the black-haired, younger Lincoln, though looking somewhat awkward, radiated confidence and energy.¹⁶⁶ The party repaired to the

¹⁶¹ Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Tribune, 5 March 1861.

¹⁶² Washington correspondence, 4 March, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 9 March 1861.

¹⁶³ Washington correspondence, 4 March, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 9 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Herald, 5 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 4 March, Baltimore Exchange, 5 March 1861.

¹⁶⁴ Fiske, "When Lincoln Was First Inaugurated," 8.

¹⁶⁵ Riddle, Recollections, 14.

¹⁶⁶ Charles Francis Adams diary, 4 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Chittenden, Recollections of Lincoln, 85-86.

President's Room, where they brushed off the dust of Pennsylvania Avenue.¹⁶⁷

As Lincoln and Buchanan chatted amicably, John Hay eavesdropped on their conversation with “boyish wonder and credulity to see what momentous counsels were to come from that gray and weather-beaten head.” Though Hay assumed that each “word must have its value at such an instant,” that was not the case. “I think you will find the water of the right-hand well at the White-House better than that at the left,” said Buchanan, who “went on with many intimate details of the kitchen and pantry.” The president-elect “listened with that weary, introverted look of his, not answering.” The following day, when Hay mentioned this colloquy, Lincoln “admitted he had not heard a word of it.”¹⁶⁸

Arm-in-arm the two presidents entered the senate chamber, where diplomats, congressmen, senators, military officers, state governors, justices of the supreme court, cabinet members, and other officials had foregathered. Preternaturally calm and impassive, Lincoln sat still, heedless of the gaze directed at him by all onlookers. The nervous, discouraged, and tired Buchanan, on the other hand, fidgeted and sighed gently.¹⁶⁹ After the swearing in of Vice President Hamlin, the assembled dignitaries proceeded to a temporary platform that erected over the steps of the east portico of the Capitol, which had for almost a decade been undergoing a major extension. Above the ramshackle scaffolding loomed the skeletal, half-finished, new cast-iron dome, flanked by a crane. Before it stood thousands of cheering spectators of all ages and both sexes,

¹⁶⁷ Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Herald, 5 March 1861.

¹⁶⁸ Hay, “The Heroic Age in Washington,” in Michael Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln's Side: John Hay's Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 119.

¹⁶⁹ Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Evening Post and New York Times, 5 March 1861.

coming from near and far, some from neighboring Pennsylvania, others from far-off California and Oregon. Many trekked in from the Midwest and Border States.¹⁷⁰ The clouds which had seemed so threatening that morning had lifted, giving way to cheerful, bright sunshine.¹⁷¹

In his famously sonorous voice, Senator Baker announced: “Fellow Citizens: I introduce to you Abraham Lincoln, the President elect of the United States of America.” Charles Francis Adams thought Baker undignified, speaking “just as if about to make a speech from the stump.”¹⁷²

Before rising, Lincoln sought a place to put his hat. Observing his awkwardness, Stephen A. Douglas (according to an Ohio congressman witnessing the proceedings) “gallantly took the vexatious article and held it during the entire reading of the Inaugural.”¹⁷³ Lincoln then stood up, calm, cool, and self-possessed.¹⁷⁴ The crowd cheered, but not vociferously.¹⁷⁵

After surveying the vast assemblage, Lincoln began deliberately and solemnly reading his address. He seemed very much at ease and cheerful as he recited the carefully prepared text, which took thirty-five minutes to deliver. His clear, high, firm voice

¹⁷⁰ Washington correspondence by “Conciliator” (Charles Francis Adams, Jr.), 4 March, Boston Evening Transcript, 7 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Tribune, 5 March 1861.

¹⁷¹ Washington correspondence, 5 March, New York Times, 6 March 1861; Washington correspondence by James Shepherd Pike, 4 March, New York Tribune, 5 March 1861.

¹⁷² Charles Francis Adams diary, 4 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁷³ An Ohio congressman paraphrased in the “An Incident of the Inauguration,” Cincinnati Commercial, 11 March 1861. Cf. John Cook’s reminiscences, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 8 February 1909; Charles Aldrich, “At Lincoln’s First Inauguration,” Annals of Iowa, 3rd series, 8 (1907): 47; Henry Watterson, “Marse Henry”, An Autobiography (2 vols.; New York: George H. Doran, 1919), 1:78; T. C. Evans, Of Many Men (New York: American News, 1888), 94; William A. Croffut, An American Procession, 1855-1914: A Personal Chronicle of Famous Men (Boston: Little, Brown, 1931), 41; Anderson, Mystery of a Public Man, 98-99.

¹⁷⁴ Washington correspondence, 4 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 6 March 1861.

¹⁷⁵ The Liberator (Boston), 8 March 1861.

carried to the outer edge of the vast crowd.¹⁷⁶ A Douglas Democrat reported that each sentence “fell like a sledge hammer driving in the bolts which unite our states.”¹⁷⁷ His voice faltered only in the final paragraph, whose reference to “the better angels of our nature” brought tears to many eyes. He delivered that peroration feelingly.¹⁷⁸

“What an audience!” exclaimed John Z. Goodrich. “How attentive!”¹⁷⁹ The crowd often applauded Lincoln’s remarks, especially fervently when he alluded to the Union. After his pronouncement that “I hold, that in contemplation of universal law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual,” the lusty cheering went on and on. An exceptionally vigorous shout of approval greeted his pledge to “take care, as the constitution itself expressly enjoins upon me, that the laws of the Union be faithfully executed in all the states.” The loudest demonstration occurred when he said to secessionists, “You have no oath registered in Heaven to destroy the government, while I shall have the most solemn one to ‘preserve, protect and defend’ it.” This passage received several rounds of cheering, as did his firm statement that the “power confided to me, will be used to hold, occupy, and possess the property, and places belonging to the government, and to collect the duties and imposts.” In addition to cheers, the crowd interjected shouts of “Good,” “That’s right,” “We’ll stand by you,” “Thank God, daylight appears at last,” and “That is the doctrine.” On the platform, Douglas also commented on

¹⁷⁶ Washington correspondence, 6 March, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 10 March 1861; Washington correspondence by John Teesdale, editor of the Iowa State Register, 4 March, Iowa State Register (Des Moines), 20 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 4 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 6 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 6 March, Chicago Tribune, 11 March 1861.

¹⁷⁷ Montgomery Meigs to his brother, John F. Meigs, Washington, 4 March 1861, Meigs Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁷⁸ Charles Francis Adams diary, 4 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁷⁹ John Z. Goodrich to John A. Andrew, Washington, 4 March 1861, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

the speech, saying sotto voce “Good!” “that’s so,” “no coercion,” and “good again.” At the conclusion, the crowd waved hats and manifested its joy with thunderous applause.¹⁸⁰

James W. Nye, a Seward loyalist from New York whom Lincoln was to name governor of Nevada, remarked: “That’s the best speech that’s been delivered since Christ’s Sermon on the Mount.”¹⁸¹ Similarly enthusiastic was Grenville M. Dodge of Iowa, who told his wife: “Old Abe delivered the greatest speech of the age. It is backbone all over.”¹⁸²

As the ancient, shriveled, parchment-faced Chief Justice Roger B. Taney, resembling a “galvanized corpse,” rose to administer the oath of office, he appeared very agitated, upset by the new president’s remarks about the supreme court. After Lincoln swore to “faithfully execute the office of President” and to “preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution,” he kissed the Bible. The crowd tossed hats into the air, wiped their eyes, and shouted till they grew hoarse.¹⁸³ Lincoln shook hands with Taney and the other dignitaries on the platform, then rode with Buchanan back down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, where a public reception was held. There the ex-president shook his successor’s hand, cordially wished him success, and returned to Pennsylvania to write a

¹⁸⁰ Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Times, 5 March 1861; New York Commercial Advertiser, 7 March 1861; Washington National Intelligencer, 5 March 1861; Gustave Koerner to his daughter Sophie, Washington, 4 March 1861, in Koerner, Memoirs, 2:118; Washington correspondence by J. Teasdale, editor of the Iowa State Register, 4 March, Iowa State Register (Des Moines), 20 March 1861; The Liberator (Boston), 8 March 1861; Edwin Greble to Mrs. Susan V. Greble, Baltimore, 4 March 1861, Edwin Greble Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁸¹ Croffut, American Procession, 43.

¹⁸² Dodge to his wife, [Washington, 4 March 1861], in J. R. Perkins, Trails, Rails, and War: The Life of General G. M. Dodge (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill, 1929), 65.

¹⁸³ Evans, Of Many Men, 94; Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Times, 5 March 1861; Washington correspondence, 7 March, Cincinnati Gazette, 8 March 1861; The Liberator (Boston), 8 March 1861.

defense of his administration.¹⁸⁴

During the inaugural ceremony, Thurlow Weed left early and passed by Winfield Scott, stationed near the Capitol beside an artillery battery. The anxious general asked how the ceremony was going. “It is a success,” answered the Wizard of the Lobby. “God be praised! God in his goodness be praised!” exclaimed Old Fuss and Feathers. The two men then embraced like a pair of joyful school-boys.¹⁸⁵

The retiring president, who during the delivery of the inaugural “looked the very picture of a forlorn, wretched, careworn, conscience-sore, decrepit old man,” seemed unenthusiastic.¹⁸⁶ Yet that afternoon, in conversation with friends, he called the address “high-toned, patriotic, conservative,” and “very able.”¹⁸⁷ (In fact, many passages in it strikingly resembled some language employed by Buchanan in his annual message to Congress the previous December.)

Senator Douglas was also positive about Lincoln’s speech, which he called “very dignified” and predicted that “it would do much to restore harmony to the country.”¹⁸⁸ Lincoln “does not mean coercion; he says nothing about retaking the forts or Federal property – he’s all right.” The president “deals in generalities – he don’t commit himself – and that is doubtless wise,” and “the tone is very kind and conciliatory.”¹⁸⁹ In the senate, Douglas called the inaugural “a peace-offering rather than a war message” and

¹⁸⁴ Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Times, 5 May 1861.

¹⁸⁵ Manuscript reminiscences of John Caldwell Tidball, 124-27, Library of Congress; Washington correspondence by Weed, 4 March, Albany Evening Journal, 6 March 1861.

¹⁸⁶ Washington correspondence, 6 March, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 10 March 1861.

¹⁸⁷ Washington correspondence, 5 March, New York Commercial Advertiser, 7 March 1861.

¹⁸⁸ Washington National Republican, 5 March 1861.

¹⁸⁹ Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Times, 5 March 1861; Koerner, Memoirs, 2:118; Washington correspondence, 6 March, Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 10 March 1861.

said that Lincoln deserved “the thanks of all conservative men.”¹⁹⁰ (According to Edwin M. Stanton, “Lincoln & the family at the White House, are represented to be greatly elated at Douglas joining in defence of the new administration. It is said to be the chief topic of conversation with visitors at the Executive Mansion.”)¹⁹¹ Virginia’s senators, however, were reportedly “most discouraged” by the thousands of onlookers “prepared to sustain and defend the Union.”¹⁹²

That evening at the inaugural ball, which took place in a specially constructed pavilion accommodating 2500 guests, Mrs. Lincoln entered on the arm of Senator Douglas, which some regarded as an indication that the Little Giant and the Rail-splitter had “buried the hatchet.” Relieved to be safely installed, and drained by the ordeal of preparing and delivering his momentous address, the new president appeared tired. One woman blurted out: “Old Abe, as I live, is tipsy. Look at that funny smile.”¹⁹³ After fifteen minutes of exchanging pleasantries in the receiving line, Lincoln remarked: “This hand-shaking is harder work than rail-splitting.” But when the journalist Gail Hamilton offered to spare him the necessity of shaking her hand, he exclaimed: “Ah! Your hand doesn’t hurt me.”¹⁹⁴ (Lincoln’s handshake as well as his hand could hurt. An English journalist told his readers that the president’s handshake “was so hard and so earnest, as

¹⁹⁰ Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 1st session, 1436-39 (6 March 1861); Johannsen, Douglas, 846-50.

¹⁹¹ Stanton to Buchanan, Washington, 12 March 1861, Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

¹⁹² John E. Wool to Sarah Wool, Washington, 5 March 1861, Wool Papers, New York State Library.

¹⁹³ Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 23 March 1861; New York Herald, 6 March 1861. Douglas said he escorted Mrs. Lincoln “because he believed Mr. Lincoln means to do what is right.” Washington correspondence, 6 March, New York Times, 7 March 1861. Mrs. Douglas, a devout Catholic, did not attend the ball because it took place during the season of Lent.

¹⁹⁴ Fiske, “When Lincoln Was First Inaugurated,” 8; [Mary Abigail Dodge], Gail Hamilton’s Life in Letters (2 vols.; Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1901), 1:314.

to have reduced my own hand nearly to the consistency of pulp.”)¹⁹⁵ Charles Francis Adams noted that the Lincolns “came in quite late. They are evidently wanting in all the arts to grace their position. He is simple, awkward and hearty. She is more artificial and pretentious.”¹⁹⁶ A reporter wrote that the dignified First Lady “seems to feel her station is as high as that of any of the Queens of the earth.”¹⁹⁷ One attendee recalled that it “at once became obvious to all that Mrs. Lincoln would never shine as a hostess in Washington society. She lacked presence, spontaneity, and all the magnetic and intellectual qualities which made Dolley Madison so popular.”¹⁹⁸ When a correspondent of the New York Herald asked the president if he had any message to convey to that paper’s editor, James Gordon Bennett, Lincoln replied: “Yes, you may tell him that Thurlow Weed has found out that Seward was not nominated at Chicago!”¹⁹⁹ The president stayed for only thirty minutes; his wife remained for another two hours.²⁰⁰

People throughout the country eagerly read and discussed the inaugural. New Yorkers walking along Broadway with their noses buried in newspapers collided with others doing the same.²⁰¹ There speculation about the inaugural led to heated exchanges among impatient men waiting outside newspaper offices.

“I’ll bet he sticks just as firm as firm as a rock,” predicted one.

“Well, he won’t,” rejoined another.

¹⁹⁵ George A. Sala, Washington correspondence, n.d., London Telegraph, n.d., copied in the Ohio State Journal (Columbus), 2 April 1864.

¹⁹⁶ Charles Francis Adams diary, 4 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

¹⁹⁷ New York Herald, 6 March 1861.

¹⁹⁸ A. Oakey Hall, “The Great Lincoln Inauguration,” Frank Leslie’s Popular Monthly 43 (March 1897): 259.

¹⁹⁹ Fiske, “When Lincoln Was First Inaugurated,” 8.

²⁰⁰ Washington correspondence by Sigma, 5 March, Cincinnati Commercial, 11 March 1861.

²⁰¹ “Excitement about the Inaugural,” New York Commercial Advertiser, 5 March 1861.

“Old Abe’s the Shanghai chicken that’ll not be afeared to fight.”

“Go long, with you, he’s as innocent as a sucking babe.”

“Fifty to a hundred dollars, he says coercion.”

“I take you; where’s your money?”

“Put it up; put it up; I’ll hold stakes.”

“No you won’t.”²⁰²

One influential resident of the Empire State opined that the “tone of the Inaugural has caused some Republicans to be ‘born again.’ Our party seems now united.”²⁰³

Baltimoreans flocked to newspaper offices and nearly came to blows in their eagerness to obtain copies of the inaugural.²⁰⁴ In Charleston, anxious crowds surrounded newspaper bulletin boards where telegrams were posted.²⁰⁵ The first copy to arrive was conveyed immediately to Governor Francis W. Pickens.²⁰⁶ Richmond secessionists danced with joy, confident that Lincoln’s address would strengthen their hand.²⁰⁷ Their counterparts in Nashville lustily crowed over the imminent prospect of war.²⁰⁸ In Montgomery, Confederate leaders eagerly read the text as it came in over the wires. Vice-president Alexander H. Stephens exclaimed, “the man is a fool!” while Robert Toombs grumbled and Jefferson Davis clenched his teeth and remained silent.²⁰⁹

²⁰² New York correspondence, 5 March, Washington States and Union, 6 March 1861.

²⁰³ Isaac Sherman to Francis P. Blair, Sr., New York, 8 March 1861, Blair and Lee Family Papers, Princeton University.

²⁰⁴ Baltimore American, 5 March 1861.

²⁰⁵ Edmund Ruffin, diary entry for 4 March 1861, Ruffin Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁰⁶ Charleston Courier, 5 March 1861.

²⁰⁷ Richmond correspondence, 5 March, Alexandria Gazette, 7 March 1861.

²⁰⁸ Nashville Republican Banner, 5 March 1861.

²⁰⁹ Montgomery correspondence, 7 March, Baltimore American, 12 March 1861.

Northerners received the address positively.²¹⁰ Benjamin Brown French, a New Hampshire Democrat whom Lincoln was to appoint commissioner of public buildings, wrote that it “is conciliatory – peaceable – but firm in its tone, and is exactly what we, Union men, want.”²¹¹ Others rejoiced that “we have a firm, vigorous, but temperate administration at this critical hour.”²¹² A Vermonter said it “breathes kindness & conciliation, but no dishonorable submission.”²¹³ In Washington, another Vermonter, Congressman Justin Morrill, wrote that it was acknowledged “by all to be a paper of extraordinary ability, and, handling difficult topics, one of extraordinary tact.”²¹⁴ Weed’s Albany Evening Journal thought Lincoln’s address foreshadowed “the conciliatory spirit which will govern his administration, and presents solid ground upon which to base the hope that, ere long, the dark war clouds which hang over the Republic will be dispersed by the rising sun of fraternal fellowship and peace.”²¹⁵ Iowa Congressman Samuel R. Curtis speculated that the inaugural would “cause reflections to supplant the excitement and fury that now seems to carry everything before it” and thus help to “arrest the revolution.”²¹⁶ The New York Tribune rejoiced that “the Federal Government is still in existence, with a Man at the head of it,” one “who will bring order out of seeming chaos,

²¹⁰ Bradford R. Wood to Chase, Albany, 5 March 1861, Chase Papers, Library of Congress. On the press reaction in general, see J. G. Randall, Lincoln the President (4 vols.; New York: Dodd, Mead, 1945-55), 1:303-10.

²¹¹ French, Witness to the Young Republic, ed. Cole and McDonough, 348 (entry for 6 March 1861).

²¹² Providence Journal, 5 March 1861.

²¹³ Ryland Fletcher to [Joseph] Barrett, Proctorsville, 9 March 1861, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

²¹⁴ Justin S. Morrill to his wife, Washington, 5 March 1861, Morrill Papers, Library of Congress.

²¹⁵ Albany Evening Journal, 5 March 1861.

²¹⁶ Samuel R. Curtis journal, 4 March 1861, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

reason out of folly, safety out of danger.”²¹⁷ Henry J. Raymond of the New York Times praised the inaugural’s “intellectual and moral vigor” and “profound sincerity.” It would have been impossible for Lincoln, said the Times, “to go further towards the conciliation of all discontented interests of the Confederacy” without “virtually abdicating the Presidency.”²¹⁸ The Boston Atlas and Bee judged that the “language of conciliation – not compromise – is very freely and strongly used in the last half of the address, while the obligation to obey the expressed will of the people, as provided by law, is as distinctly announced.” The only objection “can be possibly made to it, it is in too great a lenience to the revolutionists.”²¹⁹

The New York Commercial Advertiser felt that “those familiar with M. Lincoln’s past career, acquainted with his general conservatism and character, and aware of his firmness, honesty, and directness, expected nothing else from him than the manly, frank, and conciliatory words that he employed.”²²⁰ Jacob D. Cox reported that in Ohio the “true Republicans are cheered by the firmness of Mr. Lincoln’s inaugural, and are full of faith that the mingling of prudence and firmness in carrying out the indicated policy, which we shall have good reasons to expect, will bring us through our troubles without disgraceful concessions, and without sacrifice of true principle.”²²¹

Though most Northerners liked the substance of the inaugural, Lincoln’s “rhetorical infelicities” did not suit everyone.²²² The Jersey City American Standard

²¹⁷ New York Tribune, 5, 6 March 1861.

²¹⁸ “The Inaugural,” “The President’s Position,” New York Times, 5, 6 March 1861.

²¹⁹ Boston Atlas and Bee, 5 March 1861.

²²⁰ New York Commercial Advertiser, 5 March 1861.

²²¹ Jacob D. Cox to Chase, Columbus, 5 March 1861, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

²²² Philadelphia correspondence, n.d., National Antislavery Standard, 9 March 1861.

deplored it as “involved, coarse, colloquial, devoid of ease and grace, and bristling with obscurities and outrages against the simplest rules of syntax.”²²³ Others found Lincoln’s prose “exceedingly plain, not to say hard-favored.”²²⁴ An exceptionally partisan Ohio Democrat, Congressman Clement L. Vallandigham, suggested that Seward had composed the inaugural, which he asserted “was not written in the straightforward language expected from the plain, blunt honest man of the Northwest.” Vallandigham detected in the speech “the forked tongue and crooked counsel of the New York politician, leaving thirty millions of people in doubt whether it meant peace or war.”²²⁵

The discriminating New York attorney George Templeton Strong was more favorably impressed, calling “the absence of fine writing and spread-eagle-ism” a “good sign.” Though he objected to Lincoln’s treatment of the powers of the Supreme Court and his moral condemnation of slavery, Strong praised the inaugural for being “unlike any message or state paper of any class that has appeared in my time, to my knowledge. It is characterized by strong individuality and the absence of conventionalism of thought or diction. It doesn’t run in the ruts of Public Documents, number one to number ten million and one, but seems to introduce one to a man and to dispose one to like him.”²²⁶ (Like Strong, the Washington National Intelligencer and other papers also took exception to Lincoln’s analysis of the supreme court’s power.)²²⁷ Other New Yorkers “for first time concluded that ‘Old Abe’ had a very positive will of his own, and a way of expressing his

²²³ Jersey City American Standard, 5 March 1861, Howard Cecil Perkins, ed., Northern Editorials on Secession (2 vols.; New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1942), 1:625-26.

²²⁴ J. C. Welling to Charles Sumner, n.p., [5 March 1861?], Sumner Papers, Harvard University.

²²⁵ Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 1st session, 57 (10 July 1861).

²²⁶ Nevins and Thomas, eds., Strong Diary, 3:106 (entry for 5 March 1861).

²²⁷ “The New Administration,” Washington National Intelligencer, 7 March 1861; “The President’s Message,” Baltimore Sun, 9 March 1861; “An Unmanly Front,” Hartford Times, 7 March 1861.

sentiments with directness and vigor.”²²⁸ In Philadelphia, Sidney George Fisher said Lincoln’s inaugural showed that he “was no common man,” and the Ledger called it “mild, respectful, and full of pith in every sentence.”²²⁹ Another Philadelphian, rejoicing that the inaugural lacked cant and “the set phrases of statecraft,” thought “it was plain to the commonest intellect.”²³⁰ The Newark Advertiser was struck by “the honesty and sincerity” of the address, which indicated that Lincoln was “not the mouth-piece of the Cabinet, or of any member of that body. It contains from beginning to end no touch of mere rhetoric, unless the very last period is an exception. No diplomatic phraseology or language for effect is met with, but all is plain and clear, and, therefore, strong and characteristic of the man, whose firmness and intellect are everywhere apparent.”²³¹

Strong recorded that “Southronizers [i.e., pro-Southern Northerners] approved and applauded it as pacific and likely to prevent collision. Maybe so, but I think there’s a clank of metal in it.”²³² Many others heard that same clank, including the New York Daily News, which said that despite the address’s “courteous, considerate, and even conciliatory tone,” there “is still left a sting.”²³³ On Wall Street, a broker observed that he and his colleagues were “afraid there is too much fight in it,” and consequently “the

²²⁸ “Excitement about the Inaugural,” New York Commercial Advertiser, 5 March 1861.

²²⁹ A Philadelphia Perspective: The Diary of Sidney George Fisher Covering the Years, 1834-1871, ed. Nicholas B. Wainwright (2 vols.; Philadelphia: Historical Society of Pennsylvania, 1967), 1:381 (entry for 5 March 1861); Philadelphia Ledger, n.d., copied in the Ohio State Journal (Columbus), 14 March 1861.

²³⁰ Letter to the editor by “a sincere friend,” Philadelphia, 11 March, National Anti-slavery Standard, 16 March 1861.

²³¹ Newark Advertiser, n.d., copied in the Philadelphia Inquirer, 6 March 1861.

²³² Nevins and Thomas, eds., Strong Diary, 3:106 (entry for 5 March 1861). “Its weak points, I think, are its discussion of the political authority of the Supreme Court of the United States and its admission that the North condemns slaveholding as a moral wrong. That is unfortunate in a paper intended (among other things) to strengthen the hands of Union men at the South. We Northerners object to slavery on grounds of political economy, not ethics.”

²³³ “The Inaugural,” New York Daily News, 5 March 1861.

market is feverish.”²³⁴ Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper remarked that the address’s “words of peace and good-will seem to be traced by the bayonet point, by a mailed hand, and overtopping the figure of Mercy frowns the shadow of Force.”²³⁵ Varying the metaphor, Charles Sumner likened the inaugural to a “hand of iron in [a] velvet glove.”²³⁶

Many feared the consequences of Lincoln’s pledge to hold the forts and to collect the revenues. “Either measure will result in Civil War which I am compelled to look upon as almost certain,” Edward Everett speculated presciently.²³⁷ Most Southerners were of the same mind.²³⁸ The Richmond Whig and the Nashville Union and American both thought that sentence meant war.²³⁹ The Washington correspondent of the Charleston Mercury called it a “fiat of war” and grimly proclaimed that “the declaration of war has been spoken.”²⁴⁰ The editor of that journal warned that if Lincoln should attempt to carry out the policy implicit in that sentence, “there will be war – open, declared, positive war – with booming cannon and blood.” He added dismissively: “If ignorance could add anything to folly, or insolence to brutality, the President of the Northern States of America has, in this address, achieved it. A more lamentable display of feeble inability to grasp the circumstances of this momentous emergency could scarcely have been

²³⁴ H. D. Faulkner to Lincoln, New York, 5 March 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²³⁵ Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper, 16 March 1861.

²³⁶ Charles Francis Adams, Jr., diary entry for 4 March 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²³⁷ Edward Everett diary, 4 March 1861, Everett Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²³⁸ Dwight Lowell Dumond, ed., Southern Editorials on Secession (New York: Century, 1931); Donald E. Reynolds, Editors Make War: Southern Newspapers in the Secession Crisis (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 1970), 190-92.

²³⁹ Richmond Whig, n.d., copied in the Charleston Mercury, 9 March 1861, in Herbert Mitgang, ed., Abraham Lincoln. A Press Portrait: His Life and Times from the Original Newspaper Documents of the Union, the Confederacy, and Europe (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1971), 240; Nashville Union and American, n.d., copied in the New York Evening Post, 9 March 1861.

²⁴⁰ Washington correspondence, 5 March, Charleston Mercury, 9 March 1861, in Mitgang, ed., Lincoln, A Press Portrait, 242, 244.

exhibited.” Scornfully the editor asked, “has this vain, ignorant, low fellow no counselors – nobody of any comprehension to control and direct him?”²⁴¹ The Washington States and Union denounced the inaugural as “a miserable shilly-shallying around Robin Hood’s barn, meaningless and inexplicable.”²⁴²

Southern political leaders echoed those views. Texas Senator Louis Wigfall telegraphed to Charleston: “Inaugural means war,” a “war to the knife and knife to the hilt.”²⁴³ Supreme Court Justice John A. Campbell of Alabama deemed it “a beastly thing,” a “stump speech . . . wanting in statesmanship – of which he has none – and of dignity and decorum. I should call it an incendiary message – one calculated to set the country in a blaze. He is a conceited man – evidently he has been a great man in – Springfield, Illinois.”²⁴⁴ The Confederate commissioners, several Southern members of Congress, and the journalist Lucius Quinton Washington “agreed that it was Lincoln’s purpose at once to attempt the collection of the revenue, to re-enforce and hold Fort Sumter and Pickens, and to retake the other places. He is a man of will and firmness.”²⁴⁵ The readiness of warships in New York harbor convinced them that those plans would be implemented soon.²⁴⁶

Abolitionists disapproved of the inaugural, which they scorned as “double

²⁴¹ “The Inaugural Address of President Lincoln,” Charleston Mercury, 5 March 1861.

²⁴² Washington States and Union, 21 March 1861.

²⁴³ Wigfall to F. W. Pickens, Washington, 4 March 1861, Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, I, 1:264; Samuel R. Curtis to his wife, Washington, 4 March 1861, Colton, ed., “The Irrepressible Conflict of 1861,” 32-33; Samuel R. Curtis, manuscript journal, 4 March 1861, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

²⁴⁴ Jeremiah Black to Buchanan, Washington, 11 March 1861, Buchanan Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; John A. Campbell to his mother, Washington, 6 March 1861, Campbell Papers, Alabama State Archives, copy, Doubleday-Catton notes Library of Congress.

²⁴⁵ Lucius Quinton Washington to L. Pope Walker, Washington, 5 March 1861, Official Records of the War of the Rebellion, I, 1:263.

²⁴⁶ Washington correspondence, 4 March, Alexandria, Virginia, Gazette, 5 March 1861.

distilled conservatism” whose aim was to “gladden the hearts of ‘doughfaces.’” The “Hour has come and gone,” said Edmund Quincy, “but the Man was not sufficient for it. The speech was made with the face turned toward the South and with both knees bowed down before the idol it worships.”²⁴⁷ Frederick Douglass saw in the inaugural little hope “for the cause of our down-trodden and heart-broken countrymen.” The president “has avowed himself ready to catch them if they run away, to shoot them down if they rise against their oppressors, and to prohibit the Federal Government irrevocably from interfering for their deliverance.”²⁴⁸ Lydia Maria Child, who was willing to make “great allowance for the extreme difficulty of his position,” nevertheless thought that Lincoln “bowed down to the Slave Power to an unnecessary degree.” The inaugural, she told John Greenleaf Whittier, “makes me very doubtful of him.”²⁴⁹

But some abolitionists, like Elizur Wright, were pleased. Wright called Lincoln’s address “the most masterly piece of generalship which human history has to show.” It demonstrated “that the new President’s heart is in the right place, and that, though far in advance of the average North, he knows how to make it follow him – solid.”²⁵⁰ Though Oliver Johnson deplored Lincoln’s willingness to enforce the Fugitive Slave Act, he “was so exultant over the defeat of the compromise schemes in Congress and the failure of Weed and Seward in their efforts to exclude Chase from the Cabinet,” that he “was predisposed to a favorable judgment of the Inaugural.” He told a fellow antislavery militant that “when we consider what it might have been if Lincoln had fallen into

²⁴⁷ National Anti-Slavery Standard (New York), 9 March 1861; Oliver Johnson to J. Miller McKim, [New York], 28 March 1861, Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Manuscript Collection, Cornell University.

²⁴⁸ Douglass’ Monthly 3 (April 1861): 475.

²⁴⁹ Lydia Maria Child to John Greenleaf Whittier, 21 January 1862, Child Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵⁰ Wright to Chase, n.p., 7 March 1861, in Philip G. Wright and Elizabeth Q. Wright, Elizur Wright, the Father of Life Insurance (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1937), 213.

Seward and Weed’s trap, and when we compare it with former papers of the sort, we may well congratulate ourselves.”²⁵¹ Other abolitionists acknowledged that Lincoln “met the trying emergency with rare self possession and equanimity” and called his address “a very manly sensible document” which “must inspire the respect and confidence of all who are not blinded by jealousy or partizan zeal.”²⁵²

Overseas the mighty London Times sneered at Lincoln’s “childish” focus on constitutional issues while ignoring the political and practical reality of secession. “The Thunderer” suggested that he negotiate with the Confederate States.²⁵³ Punch was more favorable, lauding the president’s insistence that he could not allow such a dangerous precedent as secession to go unchallenged, lest seceders “go on seceding and subseceding, until a last every citizen will be a sovereign state.”²⁵⁴ Across the English Channel, La Patrie in Paris criticized Lincoln’s “irresolution.”²⁵⁵

Some Northern Democrats were unimpressed. An Ohio legislator thought the inaugural contained “too much special pleading to satisfy any portion of the country.” He sniffed that “I know many very small politicians who could get up as good an inaugural with two days labor – men who never dreamed of being statesman.”²⁵⁶

The address received mixed reviews in the Upper South and the Border States,

²⁵¹ Oliver Johnson to J. Miller McKim, New York, 7 March 1861, Samuel J. May Anti-Slavery Manuscript Collection, Cornell University.

²⁵² The Liberator (Boston), 8 March 1861; diary of Samuel J. May, 4 March 1861, May Papers, Cornell University.

²⁵³ London Times, 19 March 1861.

²⁵⁴ London Punch, 30 March 1861, Mitgang, ed., Lincoln, A Press Portrait, 248-49.

²⁵⁵ Paris La Patrie, 29 March 1861, Mitgang, ed., Lincoln, A Press Portrait, 249-51.

²⁵⁶ George S. Converse to S. S. Cox, Columbus, 5 March 1861, Cox Papers, Brown University.

where voters could not determine whether it meant peace or war.²⁵⁷ “After reading his inaugural the general public are as much at a loss to know what will be his line of policy in regard to the seceding states as before,” commented the Illinois State Register.²⁵⁸

To many, the inaugural seemed bellicose. North Carolina Senator Thomas Clingman warned that if the president “intends to use the power in his hands as he states in his inaugural, we must have war.”²⁵⁹ Such statements resonated with his constituents, who had narrowly rejected calls for a convention and were now reconsidering their opposition.²⁶⁰ Kentucky Representatives Henry C. Burnett and John W. Stevenson, along with Albert Rust of Arkansas, indignantly declared that “it smacks of coercion, compulsion, and blood.”²⁶¹ Unionist delegates to the Virginia secession convention reported that the inaugural, which “came upon us like an earthquake, and threatened to overthrow all our conservative plans,” had severely embarrassed them and weakened their position.²⁶² A resident of the Shenandoah Valley told Stephen A. Douglas that it was “almost dangerous for any one here even to suggest that the inaugural [sic] is not a declaration of war.”²⁶³ The Baltimore Sun thought it “an exhibition of remorseless

²⁵⁷ Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 260-62; Washington correspondence, 5 March, Philadelphia Inquirer, 6 March 1861.

²⁵⁸ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 6 March 1861.

²⁵⁹ Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 4th session, 1439 (6 March 1861).

²⁶⁰ Quent Busbee to Stephen A. Douglas, Raleigh, 11 March 1861, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

²⁶¹ Washington correspondence, 4 March, Alexandria, Virginia, Gazette, 5 March 1861.

²⁶² Robert Y. Conrad to E. P. W. Conrad, Richmond, 6 March 1861, “The Break-Up of a Nation: Robert Y. Conrad Letters at the Virginia Secession Convention,” Winchester-Frederick Historical Society Journal 8 (1994-95): 4; George Blow, Jr., to Stephen a Douglas, Richmond, 13 March 1861, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago. Young told the convention, “it is a remarkable fact, that the present Federal Executive, Mr. Lincoln, while he denies the power to deal with this subject peaceably – while he denies that he has any right to recognize the secession or withdrawal of these states – holds that he has the right to deal with them forcibly.” David F. Riggs, “Robert Young Conrad and the Ordeal of Secession,” Virginia Magazine of History and Biography 86 (1978): 264-65.

²⁶³ James C. Taylor to Stephen A. Douglas, Christiansburg, Virginia, 18 March 1861, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

fanaticism and unprincipled partisanship,” breathing “the spirit of mischief,” assuming “despotic authority,” and signaling a desire “to exercise that authority to any extent of war and bloodshed.”²⁶⁴

But others read it differently. Many Border State leaders, including Kentucky Congressmen Robert Mallory and Francis Bristow, thought the address signified peace rather than war.²⁶⁵ Inspired by the inaugural, Representatives John Boulogny of Louisiana and Andrew J. Hamilton of Texas planned to return home “and battle for the flag and the Union.”²⁶⁶ In St. Louis, the Missouri Democrat called the inaugural “emphatically a peace message,” and the Missouri Republican editorialized that “[s]o far as Missouri and the Border States are concerned, we have to say, that the positions assumed in the Inaugural . . . remove, to a great extent, the cause of the anxiety which have been felt by them, and do not furnish, in any sense, a justification for secession from the Union.”²⁶⁷

Some Marylanders shared those views. A Baltimore correspondent said that the inaugural “is generally well spoken of, and hopes are freely entertained that it will have a good effect in restoring peace to the country. Maryland will unhesitatingly support the policy of Mr. Lincoln’s inaugural, in preference to secession or disunion in any shape.”²⁶⁸ John Pendleton Kennedy liked the inaugural, with its “dignified and truthful” tone and “its spirit for the promotion of concord.” To that literary son of Baltimore, it seemed “conciliatory and firm – promising peace, but breathing a purpose to resist aggression

²⁶⁴ Baltimore Sun, 5, 6 March 1861.

²⁶⁵ New York Commercial Advertiser, 5 March 1861; Louisville Journal, n.d., copied in the Marion County Republican (Knoxville, Iowa), 19 March 1861.

²⁶⁶ Washington correspondence by J. Teasdale, editor of the Iowa State Register, 4 March, Iowa State Register (Des Moines), 20 March 1861.

²⁶⁷ Missouri Republican (St. Louis), n.d., copied in Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 7 March 1861.

²⁶⁸ Baltimore correspondence, 4 March, Cincinnati Gazette, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 7 March 1861.

against the Government.” He had “not the least doubt in the world” that the president “meant peace by it.” Kennedy rejoiced that “Lincoln is beginning to perceive the realities of the case and is growing more and more conservative.”²⁶⁹ The Baltimore American deemed the inaugural “pacific” and asserted that “it furnishes no pretext for disunion.”²⁷⁰ The Clipper also maintained that the inaugural “means only peace and nothing but peace, as far as is possibly consistent with our national honor and the public welfare.”²⁷¹

In North Carolina, John A. Gilmer thought that Lincoln had given “most cheering assurances, enough to induce the whole South to wait for the sober second thought of the North.”²⁷² A leading newspaper in the Tarheel State judged that the inaugural “is not unfriendly to the South” and that it “deprecates war and bloodshed, and pleads for the Union.”²⁷³ State Senator Jonathan Worth insisted that it “breathes peace to any candid mind.”²⁷⁴

Some Tennessee papers detected peace rather than war in Lincoln’s words. The Nashville Republican Banner commented that in light of his oath to enforce the laws, Lincoln had made a “mild and conservative address.” The editors thought it conciliatory enough “to dispel all idea of ‘coercion.’” Thus, “if civil war is to ensue, it will not be upon his responsibility.”²⁷⁵ The Knoxville Whig called the address “peace-loving and

²⁶⁹ John Pendleton Kennedy journal, 4, 5 March 1861, and Kennedy to George S. Bryan, Baltimore, 15 March 1861, letterpress copy, Kennedy Papers, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore; Kennedy to [Abram?] Comingo, Baltimore, 9 March 1861, Civil War Papers, Maryland Historical Society.

²⁷⁰ Baltimore American, 5 March 1861.

²⁷¹ Baltimore Clipper, 9 March 1861.

²⁷² Gilmer to Stephen A. Douglas, Greensboro, 8 March 1861, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

²⁷³ Raleigh Standard, 9 March, copied in the New York Daily News, 12 March 1861.

²⁷⁴ Jonathan Worth to his brother, Asheboro, 16 March 1861, Joseph Grégoire de Roulhac_Hamilton, ed., The Correspondence of Jonathan Worth (2 vols.; Raleigh: Edwards & Broughton, 1909), 1:134.

²⁷⁵ “Lincoln’s Inaugural,” Nashville Republican Banner, 6 March 1861.

conservative in its recommendations.”²⁷⁶

In the nation’s capital, John C. Rives, the slave-owning editor of the Washington Daily Globe, tellingly asked critics of the inaugural: “what position . . . the President of the United States could possibly take, other than that taken by President Lincoln, without a palpable, open violation of his inaugural oath, and an utter abnegation and abdication of all the powers of government?”²⁷⁷

Border State Congressmen like John S. Millson of Virginia, James M. Leach of North Carolina, and John S. Phelps of Missouri reportedly did “not endorse all the positions taken by Mr. Lincoln” but nevertheless praised “his decision and straightforwardness.”²⁷⁸ Sensibly, the Louisville Democrat observed that Lincoln “is powerless to extricate himself from the obligations of the Constitution. He cannot surrender the forts, if he desired; nor say, on the back of his oath to see that the laws are faithfully executed, that he will forbear their execution.” Yet by including modifiers like “as far as practicable” and “unless the people will withhold the requisite means, or direct otherwise,” he clearly created “a remonstrance against war.”²⁷⁹ In Alabama, the Mobile Register echoed that view, commenting that the tone of the inaugural “seems conciliatory, and upon the whole, rather more dignified – thanks, probably, to Mr. Seward – than recent emanations from the same source had led us to expect.”²⁸⁰ Lincoln could breathe a sigh of relief and look forward to a peaceable solution to the secession crisis. He had delivered a firm but conciliatory address which seemed likely to

²⁷⁶ Knoxville Whig, 9 March, copied in the Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 16 March 1861.

²⁷⁷ “The Inaugural,” Washington Daily Globe, 6 March 1861

²⁷⁸ Washington correspondence by Ben: Perley Poore, 4, 5 March, Boston Journal, 5 March 1861.

²⁷⁹ Louisville Democrat, 6 March 1861.

²⁸⁰ Mobile Register, n.d., quoted in the Louisville Democrat, 12 March 1861.

strengthen the hand of Southern Unionists.²⁸¹ Now time could work its healing wonders. “Nothing valuable can be lost by taking time,” he had said in his inaugural. Southerners would eventually realize that Lincoln was no wild-eyed abolitionist; the Upper South would probably remain in the Union; the Deep South would eventually come to understand that it was too small to survive as a viable nation and would therefore return to the fold. In May, Virginia voters would elect Unionists to Congress; in August, Tennessee, Kentucky and North Carolina would follow suit; in November, Maryland would do the same.²⁸² The nation would be restored without bloodshed. Southern senators like Crittenden, Andrew Johnson, and Lazarus Powell of Kentucky declared “that the action of the past few days, with the Inauguration to-day, means peace and a settlement of all the National difficulties.”²⁸³ Johnson said that armed with the thirteenth amendment and the bills organizing the territorial governments in Dakota, Nevada, and Colorado with no provision regarding slavery, he could effectively prevail over secessionists in Tennessee.²⁸⁴

On March 6 and 7, Congressmen Horace Maynard and Thomas A. R. Nelson of the Volunteer State asked Lincoln how his inaugural should be interpreted. He told them “that he was for peace, and would use every exertion in his power to maintain it; that he was then inclined to the opinion that it would be better to forego the collection of the revenue for a season, so as to allow the people of the seceding States time for reflection,

²⁸¹ Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 276-83.

²⁸² In addition, the following Free States were slated to hold elections for Representatives to Congress: Connecticut (April 1), Rhode Island (April 3), California (September 2), and Kansas (not scheduled at the time of Lincoln’s inauguration.) The Unionists’ chances in Virginia, Tennessee, and North Carolina seemed very good, up till the bombardment of Fort Sumter and Lincoln’s subsequent call for troops to suppress the rebellion. Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 263-88.

²⁸³ Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Times, 5 March 1861.

²⁸⁴ Washington correspondence, 4 March, Philadelphia Press, 5 March 1861.

and that regarding them as children of a common family, he was not disposed to take away their bread by withholding even their mail facilities. He expressed a strong hope that that, after a little time is allowed for reflection, they will recede from the position they have taken.”²⁸⁵

Time for reflection, however, would be far shorter than Lincoln anticipated. The day after his inauguration, the new president received a letter making that hopeful scenario invalid. From Charleston, Major Robert Anderson wrote that his Fort Sumter garrison would run out of food within six weeks. The fort, sitting on an island in the harbor and ringed by hostile South Carolina batteries, must either be resupplied or surrendered. The former course would probably lead to war, the latter to “national destruction.”²⁸⁶ Lincoln had to choose between them.

²⁸⁵ Thomas A. R. Nelson to W. G. Brownlow, Jonesboro, Tennessee, 13 March 1861, Knoxville Tri-Weekly Whig, 16 March 1861. Lincoln made similar statements to Virginia Unionists. Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 262.

²⁸⁶ Message to Congress, 4 July 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:424.