

Chapter Ten

“Aroused As He Had Never Been Before”:

Reentering Politics (1854-1855)

For Lincoln, 1854 was an annus mirabilis. As he later said of himself, by that year the practice of law “had almost superseded the thought of politics in his mind, when the repeal of the Missouri compromise aroused him as he had never been before.”¹ He and thousands of other Northerners were outraged by the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which threw open to slavery millions of acres that had long been set aside for freedom. That legislation, introduced in January 1854 by Stephen A. Douglas, allowed settlers in western territories to decide for themselves if slavery should exist there; Douglas called this “popular sovereignty.” The statute, as its author predicted, raised “a hell of a storm” because it repealed the 1820 Missouri Compromise, which forbade slavery in the northern portion of the Louisiana Purchase (encompassing what became the states of Kansas, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Wyoming, and Montana.)²

Indignation swept the Free States, where voters had been relatively indifferent to the slavery issue since the Compromise of 1850.³ “There is a North, thank God,” exclaimed a New England

¹ Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [ca. June 1860, Roy P. Basler et al., eds., The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 4:67.

² Mrs. Archibald Dixon, History of Missouri Compromise and Slavery in American Politics: A True History of the Missouri Compromise and Its Repeal, and of African Slavery as a Factor in American Politics (2nd ed.; Cincinnati: Clarke, 1903), 445.

³ William E. Gienapp, Origins of the Republican Party, 1852-1856 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 73-77. Helping to fan the flames of northern anger was the rendition of a fugitive slave, Anthony Burns, whose arrest in Boston touched off rioting so serious that hundreds of troops were dispatched to escort the unfortunate runaway to a ship returning him to bondage. Albert J. Von Frank, The Trials of Anthony Burns: Freedom and Slavery in Emerson’s Boston (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

antislavery leader in March 1854. “We have found out where even the people of N[ew] Hampshire had a heart and soul, stored away in a secret place under their waistcoats. We thought they had no such articles about them.”⁴ Antislavery Democrats in Congress denounced Douglas’s bill “as a gross violation of a sacred pledge, as a criminal betrayal of precious rights, as part and parcel of an atrocious plot” to transform free territory into “a dreary region of despotism, inhabited by masters and slaves,” and condemned Douglas for sacrificing the peace of the nation to gratify his insatiable ambition.⁵ “We are in the midst of a Revolution,” declared the New York Tribune. “The attempted passage of this measure is the first great effort of Slavery to take American freedom directly by the throat Should success attend the movement, it is tantamount to a civil Revolution, and an open Declaration of War between Freedom and Slavery on the North American Continent, to be ceaselessly waged till one or the other party finally and absolutely triumphs.”⁶ New York Senator William Henry Seward reported from Washington that protests against the Kansas-Nebraska bill from Northern legislatures, clergymen, and citizens’ assemblies were “coming down upon us as if a steady but strong North wind was rattling through the country.”⁷ In February 1854, Charles Henry Ray, editor of a paper in northern Illinois, told a friend: “I am up to my neck in Nebraska. Great God! how I hate and despise the movers of that

⁴ George G. Fogg to Elihu B. Washburne, Exeter, New Hampshire, 18 March 1854, Israel Washburn Papers, Library of Congress. On New Hampshire’s attitude toward slavery, see Lex Renda, Running on the Record: Civil War-Era Politics in New Hampshire (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997), 40-693; Donald B. Cole, Jacksonian Democracy in New Hampshire, 1800-1851 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); Thomas R. Bright, “The Anti-Nebraska Coalition and the Emergence of the Republican Party in New Hampshire: 1853-1857,” Historical New Hampshire 27 (1972): 57-88.

⁵ David M. Potter, The Impending Crisis, 1848-1861, ed. Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Harper & Row, 1976), 163.

⁶ New York Tribune, 10 May 1854.

⁷ William Henry Seward to Frances A. Seward, 19 February 1856, in Frederick W. Seward, William H. Seward; An Autobiography from 1801 to 1834, with a Memoir of His Life, and Selections from His Letters (3 vols.; New York, Derby and Miller, 1891), 2:222. See also Robert W. Johannsen, Stephen A. Douglas (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 442-43; Gienapp, Origins of the Republican Party, 73-77; Allan Nevins, The Ordeal of the Union (2 vols.; New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1947), 2:122-32.

infamous scheme, and I have but just begun to hate them, and to fight it.”⁸ Such hatred was widespread; that summer, when Douglas returned to Illinois, he said of his trip: “I could travel from Boston to Chicago by the light of my own [burning] effigy. All along the Western Reserve of Ohio I could find my effigy upon every tree we passed.”⁹

Whigs in Illinois, Lincoln observed, “were thunderstruck and stunned; and we reeled and fell in utter confusion.” But quickly they arose in a fighting mood, each one “grasping whatever he could first reach – a scythe – a pitchfork – a chopping axe, or a butcher’s cleaver.”¹⁰ Lincoln’s weapon of choice was the pen, which he used to write editorials condemning the Kansas-Nebraska Act and urging voters to elect opponents of that law.¹¹ He did not call for the establishment of a new party. In an editorial that he may well have written, the Illinois State Journal predicted in July 1854: “there will be, in our opinion, no large third party. There always

⁸ Charles Henry Ray to Elihu B. Washburne, Galena, 14 February 1854, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

⁹ George Fort Milton, The Eve of Conflict: Stephen A. Douglas and the Needless War (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1934), 175.

¹⁰ Speech at Peoria, 16 October 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:282.

¹¹ Albert J. Beveridge maintained that Lincoln in 1854 “had written several editorials for the Illinois Journal.” Beveridge, Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858 (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1928), 2:238. He singled out as examples “The Fourteenth Section” (September 11) and “Negro Power” (October 7). Cf. *ibid.*, 2:246n2. Certain that Lincoln had in 1840 contributed many articles to a Whig campaign newspaper called The Old Soldier, William E. Barton concluded that he must also have written for the Journal and, in 1928, Barton began combing through the files of that paper. He focused on the 1850s, explaining that it “would be unwise for the purposes of this experiment to begin at the commencement of Lincoln’s life in Springfield. I deem it better to choose a date after his style was formed and his political principles had matured. I am choosing 1854 as the time to begin.” Before his untimely death, Barton had concluded that Lincoln wrote dozens of editorials in 1854. William E. Barton, “Abraham Lincoln, Newspaper Man,” typescript, and “Lincoln Editorials,” handwritten memo, Springfield, 28 December 1928, and undated typescript of the same title, Barton Papers, box 13, University of Chicago. Simeon Francis was absent from Springfield in the early months of 1854. In his absence, a Wisconsin editor, the nephew of Erastus Wright, took over his editorial duties. Illinois State Register (Springfield), 2 September 1854. Isaac R. Diller told Stephen A. Douglas that Francis’s “sanctum was occupied by a one-horse lawyer & Yankee schoolmaster named Moore, who has so completely committed his paper, that Sim finds he is in for it, & hammers away at your ‘diabolical iniquity,’ in a style only equaled by his great prototype.” Isaac R. Diller to Douglas, Springfield, 31 May 1854, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago. After 1855, when Francis sold the paper to E. L. Baker and William H. Bailhache, Herndon stopped writing for it. According to Samuel C. Parks, while Congress was considering the Kansas-Nebraska bill, Simeon Francis said: “I will see Lincoln & get him to make a speech” against it. If this recollection is accurate, it seems plausible that Francis would have asked Lincoln to write editorials as well as deliver speeches in opposition to Douglas’s handiwork. Parks to Herndon, Lincoln, Illinois, 25 March 1866, Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants: Letters, Interviews and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 239.

have been but two large permanent parties in the country; and when the Nebraska matter is disposed of, the members of the free soil party will fall into the ranks of one of the parties.”¹² Similarly, Lincoln’s political ally David Davis urged Massachusetts Senator Julius Rockwell to “save the Whig party. I don[’]t fancy its being abolitionized – although no one can be more opposed to [the] admission [of] Nebraska than I am.”¹³ Robert C. Winthrop of Massachusetts shared Davis’s feelings: “I deplore the passage of the Nebraska Act I am for resisting the aggressions of slavery, but I cannot unite in taking the first great step for rending the Union by the formation of a sectional party.”¹⁴ Throughout Illinois and other Free States, Whigs in 1854 hoped to reunite the party’s northern and southern wings for the presidential contest two years thereafter.¹⁵ Only in 1856 would Lincoln and other antislavery Whigs in the Prairie State help form a new party to combat the expansion of slavery and thus fulfill the prophesy of the New

¹² Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 27 July 1854.

¹³ David Davis to Julius Rockwell, Bloomington, 15 July 1854, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. Robert C. Winthrop of Massachusetts shared Davis’s feelings: “I deplore the passage of the Nebraska Act I am for resisting the aggressions of slavery, but I cannot unite in taking the first great step for rending the Union by the formation of a sectional party.” Winthrop to an unidentified correspondent, Nahant, 23 August 1855, in Robert C. Winthrop Jr., A Memoir of Robert C. Winthrop (Boston: Little, Brown, 1897), 181.

¹⁴ Winthrop to an unidentified correspondent, Nahant, 23 August 1855, in Robert C. Winthrop Jr., A Memoir of Robert C. Winthrop (Boston: Little, Brown, 1897), 181.

¹⁵ Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 27 July 1854; Eric Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 194; Michael Holt, The Rise and Fall of the Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 879; Gienapp, Origins of the Republican Party, 82-87. The pattern of Whig behavior varied from state to state, as historian Tyler Anbinder noted: “in states where anti-slavery Whigs controlled the party and seemed determined to remain in it (such as New York), most conservatives concluded that they would never regain party dominance. They began seeking a new conservative organization in which to base their political operations. Conversely, in states where conservative Whigs held sway (such as Massachusetts), anti-slavery Whigs began to search for a new base of political operations as well.” Anbinder, Nativism and Slavery: The Northern Know Nothings and the Politics of the 1850’s (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 18-19. The Illinois Whig party divided into three factions. Some, like James W. Singleton of Quincy, joined the Democrats. Others, known as “Silver Grays” or National Whigs and led by Stephen T. Logan and John Todd Stuart, sought to keep the party alive by ignoring slavery and emphasizing economic issues. Unlike his two former law partners, Lincoln cast his lot with the far more numerous anti-Nebraska Whigs, who attacked slavery expansion boldly. Arthur Charles Cole, The Era of the Civil War, 1848-1870 (vol. 3 of The Centennial History of Illinois, ed. Clarence Walworth Alvord; Springfield: Illinois Centennial Commission, 1919), 127-28; Victor B. Howard, “The Illinois Republican Party: Part 1, A Party Organizer for the Republicans in 1854,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 64 (1971): 125-60; Stephen L. Hansen, The Making of the Third Party System: Voters and Parties in Illinois, 1850-1876 (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1980), 41, 54; Gienapp, Origins of the Republican Party, 84.

York Tribune that the “passage of the Nebraska bill will arouse and consolidate the most gigantic, determined and overwhelming party for freedom that the world ever saw.”¹⁶

*

As he once again dove into the political waters, Lincoln found himself swimming in a sea of Negrophobia.¹⁷ Illinois Democrats blatantly attacked him and other opponents of Douglas’s legislation as “nigger worshippers,” “nigger agitators,” and “nigger-stealers.”¹⁸ In September 1854, the Quincy Herald alleged that the “abolitionists of Chicago partake too largely of the instincts of the nigger himself to be ‘ashamed’ of anything they do. Who ever knew a nigger to blush, or to manifest any other evidence of shame? The nigger in Chicago occupies a reserved seat at the first tables of the best hotels – is escorted to the best cushioned pews in the first churches – and is permitted to address the people in a public speech when the privilege is denied to the white man. Last fall, Fred. Douglass, the nigger, was permitted to deliver a public address to the people of Chicago in favor of a dissolution of the Union.”¹⁹ The Herald claimed that there “are hundreds of abolitionists that wouldn’t hesitate a minute . . . to marry nigger women. . . . If the anti Nebraska abolitionists love the nigger half as much as they say they do, they wouldn’t hesitate an instant to marry all the nigger women in the free States.”²⁰ Four months later the Herald declared: “It is doubtless within the recollection of everybody how indignantly the anti-Nebraska candidates for the legislature, . . . turned up their pious noses and uttered groans of

¹⁶ New York Tribune, 10 May 1854.

¹⁷ Paul Finkleman, “Slavery, the ‘More Perfect Union,’ and the Prairie State,” Illinois Historical Journal 80 (1987): 248-69; V. Jacque Voegeli, Free but Not Equal: The Midwest and the Negro during the Civil War (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967); Eugene H. Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery: Western Anti-Negro Prejudice and the Slavery Extension Controversy (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967).

¹⁸ Hansen, Making of the Third Party System, 50. Democrats throughout the North stressed race as an issue. Leonard L. Richards, The Slave Power: The Free North and Southern Domination, 1780-1860 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2000), 118.

¹⁹ Quincy Herald, 12 September 1854.

²⁰ Quincy Herald, 16 September 1854.

contempt which came up clear from the lowest extreme of their bowels, every time they were taunted with being abolitionists or with loving the nigger so hugely that they wanted to be perpetually in his company, to live with him, eat with him, &c. . . . The people of Illinois have niggers amongst them – and . . . would like exceedingly to get rid of said niggers.”²¹

The Herald was joined by other race-baiting Illinois Democratic journals. The Illinois State Register observed that the Illinois State Journal “opens its batteries upon Senator Douglas’ Nebraska bill, following in the wake of the New York Tribune, and renewing the ‘agitation’ of the ‘nigger’ question, by humorously ! charging Douglas with opening that question Niggerdom is preparing for a new onslaught.”²² Later in the campaign the Register observed of some candidates who seemed to be straddling the slavery issue: “The people of this district will want pledges” against “all alliances with niggerism.”²³ A few days later it rejoiced to observe that there “is at least one Whig paper in the state which has not ‘withdrawn its objections’ to the fusion with niggerism.”²⁴ (In addition to such racial demagoguery, Douglas’s allies resorted to other forms of name-calling. The Springfield Register termed Horace Greeley a “white-livered moral traitor,” Cassius M. Clay an “insane fanatic,” Ichabod Coddin an “itinerant spouter of treason,” and abolitionists like Charles Sumner, Frederick Douglass, Theodore Parker, and Joshua R. Giddings “traitors to their country.”)²⁵

²¹ Quincy Herald, 10 January 1855.

²² Illinois State Register (Springfield), 14 January 1854.

²³ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 2 September 1854. This editorial called on Richard Yates to disavow any connection with the abolitionists.

²⁴ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 7 September 1854.

²⁵ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 22 May, 12 July, 29 September 1854.

The Peoria Press called opponents of slavery expansion a “negro-loving abolition party.”²⁶ In northeast Illinois, the Morris Gazette denounced a Republican candidate for Congress who, it alleged, “while a member of the constitutional convention [in 1847], whenever a vote was taken in regard to niggers that he did not dodge, was found always voting in favor of the niggers and against the white man.”²⁷ The Chicago Times, Douglas’s organ, attacked Illinois Republican leaders for allegedly promoting miscegenation at the 1847 constitutional convention, where they had voted “to legalize in this State this identical intercourse between negroes and white women, and to place such intercourse, filthy and repulsive as it is, upon the same equal footing as marriages between our white citizens.”²⁸ In western Illinois, the Pike County Union made the same allegation against a Whig congressional candidate: “He voted [in 1847] against a proposition preventing the intermarriage of whites with blacks; which was equivalent to voting that whites and niggers might intermarry.”²⁹

Illinoisans were among the most bigoted of all Northerners. In 1858, the Chicago Times asserted that there “is in the great masses of the people a natural and proper loathing of the negro, which forbids contact with him as with a leper.” Proudly the Times boasted that the Prairie State “for many years has wisely kept her soil for white men alone; she has inhibited the negro from coming within her limits for settlement, and reserved her broad prairies for her white citizens, for her white farmers, laborers and mechanics. She denied to the negro an equal participation in the right to settlement upon and cultivation of the soil, and declared that Illinois should never be cursed with slavery, and that her people should not be crowded and

²⁶ Springfield correspondence, 11 January, Peoria Press, 16 January 1855.

²⁷ Morris Gazette, n.d., copied in the Joliet Signal, 17 October 1854.

²⁸ Chicago Times, n.d., copied in the Joliet Signal, 17 October 1854. Jesse O. Norton and James Knox were the men in question.

²⁹ Pittsfield Union, ca. 27 September 1854, quoted in The Free Press (Pittsfield, Illinois), 28 September 1854.

inconvenienced by an inferior and deteriorated race.”³⁰ Republican papers lamented that the black man in Illinois was, “though born on the soil, an alien, nay worse – almost a beast. He has no rights, except the right of being taxed; he has no privileges, except the privilege of paying. His children are booted out of public schools, while no provision is made for their separate education; his testimony is not received in a Court of justice; his accounts, though he may be an honest hard-working mechanic, are worth nothing in evidence; his friends, if they remove hither from any other State, though perchance just redeemed from the thrall of chattel Slavery, are liable to be thrust into prison and thence sold into bondage.”³¹ The Illinois State Journal declared that the “truth is, the nigger is an unpopular institution in the free States. Even those who are unwilling to rob them of all the rights of humanity, and are willing to let them have a spot on earth on which to live and to labor and to enjoy the fruits of their toil, do not care to be brought into close contact with them.” The editor acknowledged that he shared “in common with nineteen-twentieths of our people, a prejudice against the nigger.”³² The militantly antislavery Chicago Tribune explained why so many Illinoisans resisted abolition: “The greatest ally of slaveholders in this country, is the apprehension in the Northern mind that if the slaves were liberated, they would become roaming, vicious vagrants; that they would overrun the North, and subsist by mendicancy and vagrancy; and that from the day they were made free, they would cease to work.”³³ Illinois Senator Lyman Trumbull told his legislative colleagues: “There is a very great aversion in the West – I know it to be so in my State – against having free negroes coming among us. Our people want nothing to do with the negro.”³⁴ Congressman William A.

³⁰ Chicago Times, 2 August 1861, 2 October 1858.

³¹ Springfield correspondence, 4 January, New York Tribune, 13 January 1855.

³² “The Nigger in the New Constitution,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 22 March 1862.

³³ Chicago Tribune, 12 August 1861.

³⁴ Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 2nd session, 944 (25 February 1862).

Richardson of Illinois, Douglas's chief ally in the House, declared that "God made the white man superior to the black, and no legislation will undo or change the decrees of Heaven . . . since creation dawned, the white race has improved and advanced in the scale of being, but as the negro was then so is he now."³⁵ The Chicago Herald referred to blacks as members of a "poor, ignorant and imbecile race" and applauded a Milwaukee theater proprietor who expelled a black audience member. "We utterly despise that spirit that would debase our own race to a social equality with the inferior races," the Herald proclaimed. When a slave ship was captured, the Herald regretted that the authorities "were so precipitate as to neglect to give the nigger worshippers a peep at them [the slaves aboard]. It would do them some good. Nothing could be more impressive than to see a couple of thousand of those naked, musky, greasy cannibals at one of their usual feasts of raw beef and dead negroes."³⁶ Democrats in Illinois, Indiana, and Ohio decorated wagons carrying young white women with banners reading: "Fathers protect us from Negro Equality."³⁷

In 1847, delegates to the Illinois constitutional convention endorsed a ban on black migration into the Prairie State, a provision which voters overwhelmingly approved the following year. In debates on that provision, anti-black sentiment was freely expressed by men like George Lemon of Marion, who doubted that blacks "were altogether human beings. If any gentleman thought they were, he would ask him to look at a negro's foot! (Laughter) What was his leg

³⁵ Congressional Globe, 37th Congress, 2nd session, 2207 (19 May 1862).

³⁶ "African Civilization," Chicago Herald, 18 April 1860; "Niggers in the Boxes," ibid., 31 May 1860; "The Raw Darkies," ibid., 7 June 1860.

³⁷ Lincoln, Illinois, correspondence, 16 August, Illinois State Register (Springfield), 17 August 1860; Dayton, Ohio, newspapers, mid-September 1863, quoted in Frank L. Klement, The Limits of Dissent: Clement L. Vallandigham and the Civil War (Lexington: University of Press of Kentucky, 1970), 247; The Illinoian (Marshall), 26 June 1858; "Who are the 'Nigger Worshippers,'" The Free Press (Pittsfield, Illinois), 17 July 1856; New York Herald, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 4 August 1858; J. Augustus Lemcke, Reminiscences of an Indianian: From the Sassafras Log behind the Barn in Posey County to Broader Fields (Indianapolis: Hollenback Press, 1905), 196.

doing in the middle of it? If that was not sufficient, let him go and examine their nose; (roars of laughter) then look at their lips. Why, their skulls were three inches thicker than white people's." William C. Kinney of Belleville said of the state's free blacks: "Those members from the northern part of the State did not know how lazy, and good-for-nothing these people were. If they did and could witness their worthlessness their opinions would be changed." Should blacks be permitted to immigrate into Illinois, Kinney argued, "we must admit them to the social hearth" and "permit them to mingle with us in all our social affairs, and, also, if they desired it, must not object to proposals to marry our daughters." Edward M. West of Edwardsville agreed, saying that "negroes were, mostly, idle and worthless persons" and that his constituents were "very anxious to get rid of them." Alexander M. Jenkins of Murphysboro declared that blacks "were a degraded race," "trifling," "worthless," and "filthy." James W. Singleton of Quincy charged that free blacks constituted "an intolerable nuisance" and warned that slave owners in neighboring states would make Illinois "a receptacle for all the worthless, superannuated negroes" they wanted to expel. Of those who wished to postpone consideration of a ban on black immigration, he asked: "What would you think of a man who would say to you, I have a negro and you have a pretty daughter, I should like a marriage contracted between them, I do not want you to decide now, postpone your decision until some other time?" Andrew McCallen of Shawneetown predicted that if the delegates did not prohibit "degraded, idle, thieving negroes" from settling in Illinois, white people in the southern part of the state would "take the matter into their own hands, and commence a war of extermination." Hezekiah Wead of Lewistown shared McCallen's fear that the southern counties would be inundated "with an idle, worthless and degraded population." Benjamin Bond of Carlyle, who averred that he would not help slave owners capture runaways, wished to forbid blacks from settling in Illinois because he was

unwilling to grant them full citizenship rights: “you never can do any thing that will be advantageous to the black population of the United States, unless you are ready to elevate the negro in the scale of his importance in the State, to all the privileges of freemen in this republic. It is useless to talk about our philanthropy unless we go to the full length of admitting the negro to a participation of all the privileges of freemen Shall we do this? Will we do it? For my own part I answer, nay. Nature has drawn a line between them and ourselves, and for one I would not be willing to go so far; indeed I believe they are in a better condition, in the hands of good masters in the slave States, than ninety-nine in a hundred are, as you see them in the State of Illinois.”³⁸

Such anti-black sentiment was not unique to Illinois; other states in the Old Northwest were also hotbeds of racism.³⁹ In 1858, George W. Julian, an Indiana congressman who referred to his state and to Illinois as “outlying provinces of the empire of slavery,” lamented that “Our

³⁸ Arthur C. Cole, ed., The Constitutional Debates of 1847 (vol. 14, Illinois Historical Collections; Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1919), 216-17, 218, 220, 225-28, 860, 862; report of the debate of 24 June 1847, Sangamo Journal, 1 July 1847.

³⁹ Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery. Racial prejudice pervaded the North in general. George M. Fredrickson, The Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914 (1971; Middletown, Connecticut: Wesleyan University Press, 1987), 140-64; James A. Rawley, Race and Politics: “Bleeding Kansas” and the Coming of the Civil War (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1969), 65-67; Eric Foner, “Racial Attitudes of the New York Free Soilers,” New York History 46 (1965): 311-29; Eric Foner, “Politics and Prejudice: The Free Soil Party and the Negro, 1849-1852,” Journal of Negro History 50 (1965): 239-56; James D. Bilotta, Race and the Rise of the Republican Party, 1848-1865 (New York: Peter Lang, 1992); Eugene H. Berwanger, “Negrophobia in Northern Pro-Slavery and Antislavery Thought,” Phylon 33 (1972): 266-75; Frederick J. Blue, The Free Soilers: Third Party Politics, 1848-54 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1973); Lorman Ratner, Powder Keg: Northern Opposition to the Antislavery Movement, 1831-1840 (New York: Basic Books, 1968); Voegeli, Free but Not Equal, 3-4; Robert F. Durden, “Ambiguities in the Antislavery Crusade of the Republican Party,” in Martin B. Duberman, ed., The Antislavery Vanguard: New Essays on the Abolitionists (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1965), 362-94; Foner, Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men, 60-61, 266-67. Foner argued that “Political anti-slavery was not merely a negative doctrine, an attack on southern slavery and the society built upon it; it was an affirmation of the superiority of the social system of the North – a dynamic, expanding capitalist society, whose achievements and destiny were almost wholly the result of the dignity and opportunities which it offered the average laboring man.” Foner, Free Soil, 11. Many antebellum Republicans supported black civil rights. Ibid., 281-95; John M. Rozett, “Racism and Republican Emergence in Illinois, 1848-1860: A Re-evaluation of Republican Negrophobia,” Civil War History 22 (1976): 101-15; Kenneth M. Stampp, “Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party of the 1850s,” in Stampp, The Imperiled Union: Essays on the Background of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 112-35; Sewell, Ballots for Freedom, 321-36.

people hate the Negro with a perfect if not a supreme hatred.”⁴⁰ Negrophobia was hardly confined to the Midwest, Julian told a convention of Illinois blacks: “The American people are emphatically a Negro-hating people.”⁴¹ Another Hoosier congressman declared that his constituents had three strong “antipathies,” viz.: “abolitionism, free-niggerism, and slavery.”⁴² Yet another Representative from Indiana declared that while he regarded slavery as “a moral, political, and physical evil” which should not be allowed to expand, he nonetheless insisted that he was “not one of those who have a sickly, fawning feeling for the blacks.” He regarded slavery as “a blessing to the entire black population.”⁴³ Referring to blacks, a delegate to the Indiana constitutional convention of 1850 proclaimed that “We cannot be charged with inhumanity in preventing our State from being overrun with these vermin – for I say they are vermin, and I know it.” A fellow delegate asserted that “it would be better to kill them off at once, if there is no other way to get rid of them. We have not come to that point yet with the blacks, but we know how the Puritans did with the Indians, who were infinitely more magnanimous and less impudent than this colored race.”⁴⁴ White vigilantes in Evansville threatened to expel from their city all members of the “lazy, worthless, drunken and thieving race” (i.e., blacks).⁴⁵ In 1851, an overwhelming majority of Hoosier voters (108,513 to 20,951) approved a constitutional

⁴⁰ George W. Julian, Political Recollections, 1840 to 1872 (Chicago: Jansen, McClurg, 1884), 115; G. W. Julian quoted in Voegeli, Free but Not Equal, 1.

⁴¹ Julian to a convention of black citizens of Illinois, 17 September 1853, quoted in Eric Foner, Politics and Ideology in the Age of the American Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 78.

⁴² William Wick, Congressional Globe, 29th Congress, 2nd session, appendix, 159 (2 February 1847). Wick said these were not merely “local antipathies.” On anti-black prejudice in Indiana, see Emma Lou Thornbrough, “The Race Issue in Indiana Politics during the Civil War,” Indiana Magazine of History 47 (1951): 165-88.

⁴³ Congressional Globe, 29th Congress, 2nd session, 180-81 (14 January 1847).

⁴⁴ Quoted in Emma Lou Thornbrough, The Negro in Indiana: A Study of a Minority (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1957), 66-67.

⁴⁵ Notice to free blacks from “the Vigilance Committee,” Evansville, Indiana, 28 August 1860, New York Herald, 14 September 1860.

provision forbidding blacks to settle in their state.⁴⁶ Hoosier editors asserted that the “black and white races can never live together, in this country, on terms of equality,” and that Republicans “opposed . . . all associations with the negro, either as a slave or citizen . . . [because it] is no ‘nigger equality’ party.”⁴⁷

Wisconsin, where voters rejected black suffrage by a margin of 40,915 to 23,074, also had its fair share of Negrophobes within the antislavery ranks. A Republican senator from the Badger State, Timothy O. Howe, viewed blacks “in the main . . . as so much animal life.”⁴⁸ An editor of a Republican newspaper in Grant County identified “the watchwords of Republicanism” thus: “No slaveholders and no niggers in the territories – white men must own and forever occupy the great west. Nigger slaves shall not be allowed to work among, associate, nor amalgamate with white people.”⁴⁹ Republican congressman C. C. Washburn sought to prevent the increase of the black population “by refusing to open new territories to be despoiled by them, and by colonizing, in Central and South America, such free blacks as are willing to go there.”⁵⁰ During the Civil War, a movement to forbid blacks from moving into Wisconsin generated considerable support, but not enough to persuade the legislature to pass an exclusionary law.⁵¹

⁴⁶ Theodore Clarke Smith, The Liberty and Free Soil Parties in the Northwest (New York: Longmans, Green, 1897), 336.

⁴⁷ Elmer Duane Elbert, “Southern Indiana Politics on the Eve of the Civil War, 1858-1861” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1967), 146.

⁴⁸ Howe to William P. Fessenden, 28 August 1864, Howe Papers, Historical Society of Wisconsin, quoted in Hans L. Trefousse, The Radical Republicans: Lincoln’s Vanguard for Racial Justice (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1969), 31.

⁴⁹ Joseph Cover in the Grant County Herald, 24 October 1857, in Michael J. McManus, “Wisconsin Republicans and Negro Suffrage: Attitudes and Behavior, 1857,” Civil War History 25 (1979): 49.

⁵⁰ Washburn quoted in William L. Barney, The Road to Secession: A New Perspective on the Old South (New York: Praeger, 1972), 125.

⁵¹ Edward Noyes, “White Opposition to Black Migration in Civil-War Wisconsin,” Lincoln Herald 73 (1971): 181-93.

In 1850, Michigan also rejected black suffrage by the lopsided vote of 30,026 to 12,846.⁵² Seven years later, Iowans turned down black suffrage by a six-to-one margin. Two years thereafter, Oregon applied for admission to the Union with a constitution outlawing black immigration.⁵³

In Ohio, the Republican-dominated legislature forbade blacks to join the state militia, prompting a Democratic journal to observe: “Black Republicans regard the nigger as good enough to make political capital with but consider his skin too black, nose too flat and heel too long to be permitted to unite with them in a corn stalk muster.”⁵⁴ A prominent Ohio Republican newspaper said “it is really desirable that the negro should be expelled.”⁵⁵ A congressman from the Buckeye State, Jacob Brinkerhoff, candidly acknowledged: “I have selfishness enough greatly to prefer the welfare of my own race to that of any other, and vindictiveness enough to wish to . . . keep upon the shoulders of the South the burden of the curse which they themselves created and courted.”⁵⁶ Ohio Senator Ben Wade, an antislavery Radical who called Washington “a mean God forsaken Nigger rid[d]en place,” supported colonization of blacks.⁵⁷ “I hope after that is done, to hear no more about negro equality or anything of that kind,” he told his colleagues. Republicans “shall be as glad to rid ourselves of these people, if we can do it consistently with justice, as any one else.”⁵⁸ From Washington, the senator complained that he was “getting sick of Niggers,” expressed contempt for a “D[amne]d Nigger lawyer,” and

⁵² Smith, Liberty and Free Soil Parties, 335.

⁵³ Berwanger, The Frontier Against Slavery, 41-43, 93-96.

⁵⁴ Ohio Patriot, n.d., quoted in the Athens Messenger, 26 June 1857, in Richard H. Sewell, Ballots for Freedom: Antislavery Politics in the United States, 1837-1860 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976), 322.

⁵⁵ Cincinnati Commercial, 3 September 1858.

⁵⁶ Brinkerhoff quoted in Stampp, “Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party,” 108.

⁵⁷ Hans L. Trefousse, Benjamin Franklin Wade, Radical Republican from Ohio (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1963), 118, 187.

⁵⁸ Wade quoted in Stampp, “Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party,” 111-12.

deplored the necessity of hiring black servants. “For mere Nigger power it will cost over five hundred dollars per year,” he told his wife. “I wish we could get a white woman of the English or Northern Europe breed.”⁵⁹

Antislavery Missourians held similar views. St. Louis workingmen declared: “White Men for Our City, and Our City for White Men!”⁶⁰ A resident of that city, Republican Congressman Frank P. Blair, maintained that “whether as a slave or a free man, the presence of multitudes of the black race is found to be fatal to the interests of our race.”⁶¹ In East Tennessee, opponents of slavery like future president Andrew Johnson regarded blacks as racially inferior. Congressman Johnson told his fellow lawmakers in 1844 that “the black race of Africa were inferior to the white man in point of intellect – better calculated in physical stature to undergo drudgery and hardship – standing as they do, many degrees lower in the scale of gradation that expresses the relative relation between God and all that he has created than the white man.” He therefore opposed legislation that would “place every splay-footed, bandy-shanked, hump-backed, thick-lipped, flat-nosed, wooly-headed, ebon-colored negro in the country upon an equality with the poor white man.”⁶²

Elsewhere in the North, opponents of slavery demonstrated little fondness for blacks. Republicans, said the New York Times, had insisted “always and everywhere, that they aimed at the good of the white men of the country, and had nothing to do with negroes.”⁶³ The editor of the New York Tribune declared: “we make no pretensions to special interest in or liking for the

⁵⁹ Wade to his wife, Washington, 9 March 1873, Wade Papers, Library of Congress. See also Hans L. Trefousse, “Ben Wade and the Negro,” Ohio Historical Quarterly 68 (1959): 166-67.

⁶⁰ Missouri Democrat, 4 April 1857, copied in the New York Tribune, 10 April 1857.

⁶¹ Blair quoted in Barney, The Road to Secession, 55.

⁶² Speech of 31 January 1844, Congressional Globe, 28th Congress, 1st session, appendix, 96, 97.

⁶³ An editorial quoted in Stampf, “Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party,” 109.

African Race. We love Liberty, Equality, Justice, Humanity – we maintain the right of every man to himself and his own limbs and muscles; for in so doing we maintain and secure our own rights; but we do not like negroes, and heartily wish no individual of that race had ever been brought to America. We hope the day will come when the whole negro race in this country, being fully at liberty, will gradually, peacefully, freely, draw off and form a community by themselves.”⁶⁴ Greeley criticized free blacks in New York, maintaining that they “have great faults,” being “vicious,” “indolent,” “dissipated,” “generally ignorant,” and “groveling in their tastes and appetites.”⁶⁵ An 1855 Tribune editorial calling for equal suffrage for all races noted: “As a class, the Blacks are indolent, improvident, servile, and licentious; and their inveterate habit of appealing to White benevolence or compassion whenever they realize a want or encounter a difficulty, is eminently baneful and enervating.”⁶⁶ The Tribune in 1857 observed that “the children of the emancipated slaves of our own State, who have now enjoyed some thirty years of comparative freedom, ought to be more industrious, energetic, thrifty, [and] independent, than a majority of them are,” that “they have not done so well as might fairly have been expected of them,” and that “the cause of Emancipation throughout the world is thereby embarrassed and retarded.”⁶⁷ In 1853, the New York Tribune’s Washington correspondent, James Shepherd Pike, urged that the U.S. not acquire Cuba because it “is in no more fit condition to become a State than is Hayti or Jamaica. The predominant black population in all of them constitutes an insuperable bar to their incorporation into our system. Populous territory filled with black, mixed, degraded and ignorant, or inferior races, we do not want.” A Radical

⁶⁴ New York Tribune, 29 February 1860.

⁶⁵ Greeley, “Christianity and Color,” The Independent (New York), 20 September 1860.

⁶⁶ New York Tribune, 22 September 1855.

⁶⁷ New York Tribune, 3 August 1857.

Republican, Pike added that “Blacks and mulattoes, and quadroons, and mestizoes we have enough of – and more than enough. We want no more ebony additions to the Republic.”⁶⁸

According to the New York Tribune, in “their private conversation, no men are more frank in acknowledgment and reproof of negro sloth and vice than Abolitionists.”⁶⁹ A case in point was the eminent antislavery divine, Theodore Parker of Boston, who in 1857 told a friend: “There are inferior races which have always borne the same ignoble relation to the rest of men, and always will. For two generations, what a change there will be in the condition and character of the Irish in New England! But in twenty generations, the negroes will stand just where they are now; that is, if they have not disappeared. In Massachusetts there are no laws now to keep the black man from any pursuit, any office, that he will: but there has never been a rich negro in New England; not a man with ten thousand dollars, perhaps none with five thousand dollars; none eminent in any thing except the calling of a waiter.”⁷⁰ Parker told the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Convention that the “African is the most docile and pliant of all the races of men, none has so little ferocity. No race is so strong in the affectional instinct which attaches man to man by tender ties, none so easy, indolent, confiding, so little warlike.”⁷¹ In a commentary on John Brown’s 1859 raid at Harpers Ferry, which he backed, Parker wrote that “the Anglo-Saxon with common sense does not like this Africanization of America; he wishes the superior race to

⁶⁸ New York Tribune, 10 January 1853, in James Shepherd Pike, First Blows of the Civil War: The Ten Years of Preliminary Conflict in the United States, from 1850 to 1860 (New York: American News Company, 1879), 163. On Pike’s antislavery views, see Robert F. Durden, James Shepherd Pike: Republicanism and the American Negro, 1850-1882 (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1957), 14-51.

⁶⁹ New York Tribune, 3 August 1857.

⁷⁰ Theodore Parker to a Miss Hunt, 16 November 1857, Octavius Brooks Frothingham, Theodore Parker: A Biography (Boston: Osgood, 1874), 467.

⁷¹ Theodore Parker, The Present Aspect of Slavery in America (Boston: William Kent, 1858), 5, quoted in Paul E. Teed, “Racial Nationalism and its Challengers: Theodore Parker, John Rock, and the Antislavery Movement,” Civil War History 41 (1995): 150.

multiply rather than the inferior.”⁷² Another Unitarian minister, William Ellery Channing, lamented that antislavery societies “ought never to have permitted our colored brethren to unite with us in our associations!”⁷³ A black preacher observed that some abolitionists, no matter how much they might hate slavery, nonetheless “hate a man who wears a colored skin worse.”⁷⁴

One of Theodore Parker’s most enthusiastic fans, Lincoln’s partner William Herndon, wrote to a congressman in 1859: “I see you have got the nigger up in the House ‘a—ready.’ Can you kick him out when you want him gone? Niggers are great institutions, are they not? My colored brethren here say – ‘Why – Good Lord-a-massy Billy – de nigger am de great object of the American Gubernment – dey am always de talk – Can’t legislate for mail bags: but that de nigger am in the threads – in de whole bag massa – What am you going – you white folks – to do with the darkey?’” Herndon added: “‘The Niggers’ (as they themselves say) are America’s great home-made institution.”⁷⁵ A correspondent for the abolitionist paper that first published Uncle Tom’s Cabin declared that “the real evil of the Negro race” is “that they are so fit for slavery as they are.”⁷⁶

⁷² Theodore Parker, John Brown’s Expedition in a Letter from Theodore Parker, at Rome, to Francis Jackson, Boston (Boston, 1860), 14, quoted in William H. Pease and Jane H. Pease, “Antislavery Ambivalence: Immediatism, Expediency, Race,” American Quarterly 17 (1965): 686.

⁷³ Channing paraphrased in William Lloyd Garrison to Lewis Tappan, Brooklyn, Connecticut, 17 December 1835, in Walter M. Merrill, ed., The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison (6 vols.; Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1971-81), 1:581.

⁷⁴ Nathaniel Paul, speech to the Albany Anti-Slavery Convention, 1 March 1838, quoted in Jane H. Pease and William H. Pease, They Who Would Be Free: Blacks’ Search for Freedom, 1830-1861 (New York: Atheneum, 1974), 84.

⁷⁵ William H. Herndon to John A. McClernand, Springfield, 8 December 1859, McClernand Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

⁷⁶ The National Era (Washington), 2 June 1853.

Abolitionists in Burlington, New Jersey, complained that free blacks gave themselves over “to Idleness, Frolicking, Drunkenness, and in some few cases to Dishonesty.”⁷⁷ In 1860, a Republican paper in New York said “the negro . . . , animated by the caprice of all savages, will work only when he pleases, and is indolent and insubordinate when he affects to work.”⁷⁸ The antislavery New York Evening Post described slaves as “idlers and thieves, without education, without virtue, without discipline and without character.”⁷⁹ The New York Courier and Enquirer declared that a “more wretched, lazy, and imprudent set than the free negroes of our Northern States could not generally be imagined. Almost every one believes that there is something inherent in the African race which forbids its working, save when driven to do so, to obtain the necessities of life.”⁸⁰ That paper’s editor, James Watson Webb, further stated that the “negro in our judgment, is physically, socially, and morally, in a better condition as a slave in most of the Slave States, than he would be in a state of freedom; and therefore, opposed as we are to the Institution, if the General Government possessed the power and the constitutional right, to abolish Slavery in the Slave States, we should earnestly protest against its abolition without first providing for the extradition of the freedmen beyond the limits of the United States.”⁸¹ He asserted that the black population of the North “hangs upon society without a habitation or a home, and it has, and feels, no responsibilities. To a great extent it is composed of ignorance unmitigated or modified, by either a religious or moral sentiment of sufficient power to exercise

⁷⁷ “Report of the Acting Committee, Burlington Anti-Slavery Society” (Misc. MSS of the Pennsylvania Abolition Society), 5:127-28, quoted in Arthur Zilverschmit, The First Emancipation: The Abolition of Slavery in the North (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1967), 223.

⁷⁸ New York World, 13 July 1860.

⁷⁹ New York Evening Post, 26 September 1860.

⁸⁰ New York Courier and Enquirer, 2 August 1860.

⁸¹ New York Courier and Enquirer, 3 August 1860. Another Republican journal in Virginia endorsed these sentiments. Wheeling, Virginia, Intelligencer, n.d., copied in the New York Courier and Enquirer, 1 September 1860.

a beneficial control over its actions.” Whites were, said Webb, not “ready to barter away the noble prerogative of being the masterpiece of nature” to blacks, upon whom “history . . . placed the indelible stamp of inferiority.”⁸²

The main rival of Webb’s paper, the New York Journal of Commerce, declared that “the negroes held in slavery in the United States, are much better off, physically and morally, than their ignorant and degraded brothers in Africa.” On that continent, the typical native “is an habitual drunkard, a thief, a liar, revengeful, licentious, groveling in his habits, almost destitute of natural affection, [and] unprogressive in character.” Any student of ethnology “knows that a superior and an inferior race cannot continue to continue to occupy the same territory on terms of equality. Either the inferior race will be enslaved, and in that condition increase and multiply, if treated with reasonable kindness, – or, in the attempt to compete with the superior race, be ultimately wiped out of existence by their greater skill and strength.”⁸³

Ethnologists did in fact preach the doctrine of black racial inferiority. Louis Agassiz, an eminent professor of zoology and geology at Harvard, opposed both slavery and social equality for blacks, whom he described as “indolent, playful, sensual, imitative, subservient, good-natured, versatile, unsteady in their purpose, devoted and affectionate.” They were “entitled to their freedom, to the regulation of their own destiny, to the enjoyment of their life, of their earnings, of their family circle. But with all this nowhere do they appear to have been capable of rising, by themselves, to the level of the civilized communities of the whites, and therefore I hold

⁸² New York Courier and Enquirer, 17 July 1843, 3 October 1831, quoted in James L. Crouthamel, “James Watson Webb: Mercantile Editor,” New York History 41 (1960): 417-18.

⁸³ “The Negro Race,” New York Journal of Commerce, 26 October 1860.

that they are incapable of living on a footing of social equality with the whites in one and the same community without becoming an element of social disorder.”⁸⁴

In Illinois, Jonathan Baldwin Turner of Jacksonville, an opponent of slavery and a champion of universal education, offered a similar ethnological analysis in The Three Great Races of Men.⁸⁵ Turner described whites as polar people and blacks as equatorial people. The “great mission” of the former “is to analyze and to conquer,” while that of the latter “is to enjoy and adore . . . as one is of a being of intellect, of the head – the other of sentiment of the heart.” If they lived with whites, blacks were bound to be subordinate: “The two races cannot dwell together . . . first because God never designed that they should . . . and second, because each race is still essentially barbarian in the only line where the other has begun to be civilized – the one in the head, the other in the heart.” The blacks should be colonized to Haiti or other tropical lands south of the United States, Baldwin recommended.⁸⁶

Disagreeing about the need for colonization was a fellow resident of Jacksonville, Julian Sturtevant, president of Illinois College, a hotbed of abolitionism. In 1863, he argued that blacks would die out after emancipation because once “the negro is made a free laborer he is brought into direct competition with the white man; that competition he is unable to endure; and he soon finds his place in that lower stratum . . . [where he will] struggle in vain against the laws of nature, and his children will, many of them at least, die in infancy.” Soon the black race would be extinct in the U.S. “The negro does not aspire to political or social equality with the

⁸⁴ Louis Agassiz to Samuel G. Howe, [Nahant], 10 August 1863, in Elizabeth Cary Agassiz, ed., Louis Agassiz; His Life and Correspondence (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1893), 2:600-12.

⁸⁵ Mary Turner Carriell, The Life of Jonathan Baldwin Turner (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961).

⁸⁶ Turner, The Three Great Races of Men: Their Origin, Character and Destiny with Special Regard to the Present Conditions and Future Destiny of the Black Race in the United States (Springfield: Bailhache & Baker, 1861), 1-71, quoted in Don Harrison Doyle, The Social Order of a Frontier Community: Jacksonville, Illinois, 1825-70 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1978), 149.

white man He appeals not to our fears but to our compassion. He asks not to rule us: he only craves of us leave to toil; to hew our wood and draw our water, for such miserable pittance of compensation as the competition of free labor will award him – a grave.”⁸⁷

Other leading opponents of slavery offered similar arguments. The Rev. Dr. James Freeman Clarke informed his congregation that “blacks have not the indomitable perseverance and will, which make the Caucasian, at least the Saxon portion of it, masters wherever they go.” Moncure Conway, Theodore Tilton, and Samuel Gridley Howe all thought blacks intellectually inferior to whites.⁸⁸ An eminent author and Radical Republican, Bayard Taylor, called blacks “the lowest type of humanity known on the face of the earth.”⁸⁹

Negrophobia among antislavery Northerners was mild compared with the racism espoused by many Democrats, who, according to Ohio Republican leader Salmon P. Chase, wanted “simply to talk about the universal nigger question, as they call it. All that they seem to say is ‘nigger, nigger, nigger.’”⁹⁰ In 1858, a leading newspaper of New England, the Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, observed that for Northern Democrats, “Negrophobia is . . . pretty much all that is left for stump uses,” hence their campaign documents are “all about niggers – nothing but niggers.”⁹¹ In New Hampshire, a Democratic party organ described the black man as “the mere infant of the human family, ever needing nurture, restraint, and correction. Hence, in all ages and countries, he has been the servant and slave, suffering the most cruel and revolting

⁸⁷ Sturtevant, “The Destiny of the African Race,” Continental Monthly, 3 (1863): 600-10, in Doyle, Jacksonville, 150.

⁸⁸ James M. McPherson, The Struggle for Equality: Abolitionists and the Negro in the Civil War and Reconstruction (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 143-47; McPherson, “A Brief for Equality: The Abolitionist Reply to the Racist Myth, 1860-1865,” in Duberman, ed., Antislavery Vanguard, 164-69.

⁸⁹ Bayard Taylor, lecture on “Man and Climate,” quoted in the Cleveland Plain Dealer, 12 January 1861, in Howard Cecil Perkins, ed., Northern Editorials on Secession (2 vols.; New York: D. Appleton-Century, 1942), 1:489.

⁹⁰ “Speech of Gov. Chase at Sandusky, Ohio, August 25, 1859,” clipping, box 17, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, in Foner, Free Soil, 264.

⁹¹ “Down with the Nagurs!” Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 6 October 1858.

slavery among his own kith and kin.”⁹² An Ohio editor used similar imagery in describing blacks: “the natives of Africa are no more able by a spontaneous effort to raise themselves from their debased social, moral and religious condition, than a newly born infant is capable of supplying itself with food and raiment without the care of its parents.”⁹³ Democrats pointed to Africa, Mexico, and South America to illustrate the inferiority of the black race. The Illinois State Register declared that “the Creator never intended that the negro should be put on a level with the white man He is not his equal in any respect. He is far below him in intellect and refinement – has never, in any age of the world, shown any evidence of culture or skill in any of the arts and sciences.” On the African continent, the black inhabitants’ “present civilization . . . is nothing but a mild state of barbarism, and with all their association with the whites, either as slaves or freemen, [they] have never exhibited anything that would warrant them worthy of being put upon a level with a superior race.” In Mexico and elsewhere in Latin America, where whites and blacks “have amalgamated in the true sense of the term,” the “sad and sickening condition of those people is well calculated to enlist the sympathy of every man. Rapidly retrograding in the scale of being, they exhibit the evidences of mental and moral decay at every stage of their existence. All improvements are neglected, whilst they are addicted to all the vices and profligacy imaginable. Lazy and indolent, suspicious and vindictive, they study nothing but deceit and treachery, and secretly devise plans to assassinate their rivals.”⁹⁴ In Massachusetts, the Democratic leader Caleb Cushing said that free blacks there were, “in circumstances . . . physical and moral, so uncongenial to their nature, that with all the gratuitous petting bestowed upon them, and all their accessions from runaways, they are unable to keep pace with the natural

⁹² Democratic Standard (Concord), 8 September 1860, in Perkins, ed., Northern Editorials, 1:469.

⁹³ Hamilton, Ohio, Telegraph, 27 December 1860, in Perkins, ed., Northern Editorials, 1:484.

⁹⁴ “What Would be the Effect of Negro Equality?” Illinois State Register (Springfield), 9 October 1858.

progress of population; they do not make themselves a place in the community by average capableness; and they have not sufficient force of character or intelligence to betake themselves, as they should, somewhere else, to try their hands in the responsible business of life among men of their own race, and to rise or fall according to their deserts, in the British West Indies, in Hayti, or in Liberia.”⁹⁵

To combat their opponents’ demagoguery, Republicans insisted that they, and not the Democrats, truly championed the interests of whites. In 1858, the New York Times disavowed any “abstract love of the negro.” Republicans, said the Times, had “uniformly and most emphatically repudiated the idea that they had anything whatever to do with negroes or negro rights.”⁹⁶ The New York Tribune protested against “the silly lie that ours is a ‘negro party’ – that ‘it has no idea but “nigger! nigger!”’ – that it cares nothing or thinks nothing of the interests and welfare of White Men.”⁹⁷ The Tribune’s editor insisted that the Republican party “contemplates primarily the interest of Free White Labor, for which it struggles to secure the unoccupied territory of the Union.”⁹⁸ David Wilmot cited similar reasons to justify his famous 1846 proviso forbidding slaveholding in land acquired as a result of the Mexican War: “I would preserve to free white labor a fair country, a rich inheritance, where the sons of toil, of my own race and color, can live without the disgrace which association with negro slavery brings upon free labor.”⁹⁹ From a constituent an Illinois Republican congressman heard a similar argument: “The

⁹⁵ Caleb Cushing to the organizers of a banquet honoring James L. Orr, n.p., n.d., Boston Post, n.d., copied in the Indiana State Sentinel (Indianapolis), 12 October 1858.

⁹⁶ An editorial quoted in Stamp, “Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party,” 109.

⁹⁷ New York Tribune, 6 March 1860.

⁹⁸ Horace Greeley quoted in The Liberator (Boston), 5 October 1860. And yet Greeley denounced Republican politicians who, to defend themselves against Democrats raising “the cry of ‘nigger’ against them,” felt compelled to “be as harsh, and cruel, and tyrannical, toward the unfortunate blacks as possible, in order to prove themselves ‘the white man’s party.’” Greeley quoted in Stamp, “Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party,” 120.

⁹⁹ Wilmot quoted in Stamp, “Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party,” 108.

people of the North will never consent to come in contact with the institution of slavery in the territories. To work side by side with negro slaves . . . will leave [them in a condition] little above slaves themselves. Let [Southerners] keep their niggers if they will, but they must not bring them in contact with us. No matter whether we are opposed to the extension of slavery from our humanity and love of right and justice, or from hatred of niggers (of the latter class are many Illinois Republicans) we are terribly in earnest in our opposition to the extension of that institution.”¹⁰⁰ Iowa Senator James Harlan shared that view: “The policy of the Republican party invites the Anglo-Saxon . . . and others of Caucasian blood, by its proposed preemption and homestead laws, to enter and occupy [the territories], and by the exclusion of slavery it will practically exclude the negro and kindred races.”¹⁰¹ In Indiana, Michael Garber, who would become the Republican state chairman, insisted that it “is not negro equality only, but negro government, negro supremacy, and negro rights to the exclusion and abasement of White Men, that the Republican party oppose. Nigger! Nigger!! What would Mr. Buchanan’s people [i.e., Democrats] do without the eternal inevitable nigger.”¹⁰² A leader of Virginia’s antislavery movement chastised Democrats for their preoccupation with race: “It is niggers, niggers, niggers, first and always Tariff and everything else must be made to suit their niggers. Our interest . . . is the White man[’]s interest. I am proud to say that I belong to the white man[’]s party [i.e., the Republican party].”¹⁰³ The Indianapolis Journal declared that the voters must “choose between

¹⁰⁰ Quoted in Stamp, “Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party,” 109-10.

¹⁰¹ James Harlan quoted in Barney, The Road to Secession, 124-25.

¹⁰² Madison, Indiana, Daily Evening Courier, 26 August 1856, quoted in Elbert, “Southern Indiana Politics,” 62-63.

¹⁰³ Alfred Caldwell, speech in Richmond to a convention of Whigs and others opposed to the Democrats, Wheeling, Virginia, Intelligencer, 7 February 1859, quoted in Patricia P. Hicken, “Antislavery in Virginia, 1831-1861” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Virginia, 1968), 723.

the nigger Democracy and the white man's party."¹⁰⁴ The chairman of the California delegation to the 1860 Republican convention asserted that it "is not with us a question of niggers, it is a question of white men."¹⁰⁵ Republicans in Macon County, Illinois, proclaimed that "the industry, virtue and patriotism of the free white laboring classes is the great bulwark of our political freedom" and "our cause is that of the white man, and our object the encouragement and prosperity of free white labor, and the spread of free society."¹⁰⁶ A Republican leader in Galena insisted that his "party is really and truly the white man's party."¹⁰⁷ The Springfield Illinois State Journal agreed, asserting that the Republican party was "preeminently the white man's party. It defends the cause of free labor and honorable industry against the encroachments of slave labor. It repels the modern Democratic dogma, that slavery should not only be nationalized but should be made dependent, not upon color, but condition."¹⁰⁸ Opponents of slavery in Missouri declared that they were "opposed to negro equality and to all who favor negro equality, and to those who seek its accomplishment, by compelling white men to work side by side with negro slaves," and that they believed "it to be for the best interests of Missouri that slavery should become extinct within her borders, and the negroes removed beyond her limits. Give us Missouri for white men and white men for Missouri."¹⁰⁹ According to the Chicago Tribune, "The doctrine of the Abolition party is, to let the African race alone, neither marry nor cohabit with them; to give them their freedom; treat them as human beings; pay them for their work; separate the whites

¹⁰⁴ Indianapolis Daily Journal, 26 June 1860, quoted in Emma Lou Thornbrough, "The Race Issue in Indiana Politics during the Civil War," Indiana Magazine of History 47 (1951): 168.

¹⁰⁵ F. P. Tracy, speech at Cooper Institute, New York City, New York Tribune, 8 June 1860.

¹⁰⁶ Illinois State Chronicle (Decatur), 17 June 1858.

¹⁰⁷ William Cary to Elihu B. Washburne, Galena, 16 May 1858, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

¹⁰⁸ Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 15 July 1857

¹⁰⁹ Chicago Weekly Times, 22 July 1858.

from adulterous communication with them, and preserve the purity of the Caucasian blood from African admixture.”¹¹⁰

Some Republicans responded to the Democrats’ race baiting in kind.¹¹¹ The Free Press of Pittsfield, Illinois, rebuked the Rushville Times for advising Republicans to “be consistent! Just agree to sleep with Fred Douglass and marry your daughters to specimens of the thick-lip-gentry and be done with it.” The Free Press reminded the Times “that its co-laborers of the South live among niggers, work among niggers, eat among niggers, drink among niggers and sleep with niggers. That they never get out of sight of a nigger, and their constant intercourse with niggers corrupts even their manners and language, and leads them to acquire nigger antics, nigger pronunciation, and nigger language. . . . The Anti-Nebraska men are laboring to keep Kansas and her white people free from the foul contamination with niggers; their purpose is to keep niggers out of Kansas.”¹¹² The New York Courier and Enquirer conceded that “the negro is a fellow-being, and entitled to be treated as such,” but added that “at the same time [we] tell him that socially he cannot be the equal of the white, for the line drawn between the two by the Creator is too strongly marked to be overlooked.”¹¹³ Charles L. Wilson of the Chicago Journal assured Lyman Trumbull “you may always find the Journal opposing the policy of ‘putting too much nigger in our platform.’” Wilson said he was “resolutely opposed to the ‘equallizing of the races’” and argued that “it no more necessarily follows that we should [have] fellowship with negroes because our policy strikes off their shackles, than it would to take felons to our

¹¹⁰ Chicago Tribune, 14 March 1863.

¹¹¹ “Republican journals frequently referred to colored people as ‘Sambo,’ ‘Cuffie,’ and ‘niggers,’ and derisively mocked their dialect. . . . Some of the same newspapers that most deplored Negrophobia referred to colored persons as ‘niggers’ or ‘shades’ and praised the white race for its superior intelligence and strength.” Voegeli, Free but Not Equal, 8, 179.

¹¹² The Free Press (Pittsfield, Illinois), 31 July 1856.

¹¹³ New York Courier and Enquirer, 13 July 1860.

embraces, because we might remonstrate against cruelty to them in our penitentiaries.”¹¹⁴ Other Republican newspapers in Illinois echoed these views.¹¹⁵

Many antislavery spokesmen were careful not to offend the racist sensibilities of potential recruits to their cause. James A. Thome, an abolitionist who helped Theodore Dwight Weld spread the antislavery gospel throughout Ohio in 1835, denied that he and his allies favored social equality. Describing a speech he gave in Akron, Thome reported: “I was particularly careful to disclaim certain things which are confounded with abolitionism; such as social intercourse, amalgamation, etc. I further stated that we did not claim for the slave the right of voting, immediately, or eligibility to office. Also that we did not wish them turned loose, having the possession of unlicensed liberty; nor even to be governed by the same code of Laws which are adapted to intelligent citizens. That on the contrary we believed that it would be necessary to form a special code of Laws restricting them in their freedom, upon the same general principles that apply to foreigners, minors, etc.”¹¹⁶ A leading critic of the doctrine of black inferiority, Charles C. Burleigh, used a similar strategy in appealing on behalf of abolitionism:

“Emancipation would both keep [the blacks] at home [in the South] and draw back many who were driven hither [to the North] by slavery but who would gladly return when they could do so

¹¹⁴ Charles L. Wilson to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 12 May 1858, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

¹¹⁵ A historian of the Bloomington, Illinois, Pantagraph noted that it “was abolitionist on constitutional, if not humanitarian, grounds. It was a solid, radical, ‘Black Republican’ newspaper. Yet, a glance at almost any edition reveals a bias against Blacks, whether free in the North or slave in the South, painting them as inferior.” Don Munson, ed., It is Begun!: The Pantagraph Reports the Civil War (Bloomington: McLean County Historical Society, 2001), xi.

¹¹⁶ J. A. Thome to Weld, Middlebury, Ohio, 9 February 1836, in Gilbert H. Barnes and Dwight L. Dumond, eds., Letters of Theodore Dwight Weld, Angelina Grimke Weld, and Sarah Grimke, 1822-1844 (2 vols.; Washington, D.C.: American Historical Association, 1934), 1:257.

and be free.”¹¹⁷ A New York Republican paper opposed black suffrage because it “is undesirable that the two races should exist in close proximity.”¹¹⁸

*

Lincoln eschewed such racial arguments in his anonymous newspaper attacks on the Kansas-Nebraska Act.¹¹⁹ In March, the Journal ran an editorial, probably by Lincoln, with themes that he would stress in formal speeches later that year. It condemned the Democratic Illinois State Register for supporting Douglas’s bill. “If he [George Walker, co-publisher of the Register] can find any ‘principle’ in the constitution that allows George Walker, white man, to enslave George Walker, black man, then he has some ground for ‘conscience sake’ to stand upon.” But there was no such constitutional justification for allowing slavery to expand into the northern portion of the Louisiana Purchase. “If the principle of free government means anything, the black man must stand on the same footing of ‘governing himself’ as the white. . . . The Register with one blow would annul the grandest principle of free government and GIVE to ten thousand slaveholders from the south, the privilege of setting up slave pens in Nebraska, thus widening the foulest curse, and fostering the most ‘insidious enemy’ that holds in the bosom of our Republic.”¹²⁰

¹¹⁷ Burleigh quoted in Stamp, “Race, Slavery, and the Republican Party,” 108.

¹¹⁸ New York World, n.d., quoted in Douglass’s Monthly 3 (October 1860): 339.

¹¹⁹ Lincoln’s editorials contradict the assertions of historians like Robert W. Johannsen, who observed that if Lincoln “was aroused as never before [by the Kansas-Nebraska Act], he did not reveal the fact until eight months after the Kansas-Nebraska bill had been introduced and three months after it had passed. By that time virtually all the arguments against the legislation had been voiced; when Lincoln finally made his move, it was almost anticlimactic.” Johannsen, Lincoln, the South, and Slavery (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 25. David Herbert Donald maintained that during the winter, spring, and summer of 1854, “Lincoln said and wrote nothing” about the Kansas-Nebraska Act. Donald, Lincoln (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1995), 168.

¹²⁰ Illinois Journal (Springfield), 24 March 1854. The use of George Walker’s name in the hypothetical example resembles Lincoln’s use of John Calhoun’s name in a hypothetical example contained in a Journal editorial on 11 September 1854, which is widely regarded as Lincoln’s handiwork, even by Roy P. Basler. The March 24 editorial does not sound like most of the editorials published previously on the Kansas-Nebraska Act. On the day that it appeared, the editor of the Journal, Simeon Francis, wrote a card saying: “The undersigned has been unable to attend to the editorial duties of this office for several days and will be absent probably for several weeks to come.” Illinois

Throughout 1854, the Journal continued publishing editorials, in all likelihood by Lincoln, assailing the Kansas-Nebraska Act. One editorial that virtually all authorities agree was his handiwork ridiculed the fourteenth section of that law, which stated that it was “the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any territory or State, not to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way.” Sarcastically, Lincoln proposed an analogy to expose the illogic of that assertion: “Abraham Lincoln has a fine meadow, containing beautiful springs of water, and well fenced, which John Calhoun had agreed with Abraham (originally owning the land in common) should be his, and the agreement had been consummated in the most solemn manner, regarded by both as sacred.” In time, Calhoun had “become owner of an extensive herd of cattle,” which, because of a drought, was starving. Thereupon Calhoun, “with a longing eye on Lincoln’s meadow,” dismantles his neighbor’s fence.

“‘You rascal,’ says Lincoln, ‘what have you done? What do you do this for?’

“‘Oh,’ replies Calhoun, ‘everything is right. I have taken down your fence; but nothing more. It is my true intent and meaning not to drive my cattle into your meadow, nor to exclude them therefrom, but to leave them perfectly free to form their own notions of the food, and to direct their movement in their own way!’

“Now would not the man who committed this outrage be deemed both a knave and a fool, – a knave in removing the restrictive fence, which he had solemnly pledged himself to sustain; –

Journal (Springfield), 28 March 1854. Lincoln went on the circuit around April 5 and returned on June 10; during that time, the Journal rarely discussed Nebraska bill, though it was pending in the House, or slavery in general (save May 24). Shortly after Lincoln’s return from the circuit, a series of long, analytical editorials on Kansas-Nebraska bill and slavery appeared.

and a fool in supposing that there could be one man found in the country to believe that he had not pulled down the fence for the purpose of opening the meadow for his cattle?”¹²¹

While this barb was aimed at his former surveying boss, John Calhoun, Lincoln understandably focused attention most closely on Stephen A. Douglas. From 1854 to 1860, Lincoln and Douglas engaged in an ongoing political and moral contest, of which their celebrated debates in 1858 formed only a part.

Douglas proved a formidable, immensely popular opponent, as Lincoln acknowledged.¹²² From 1852, when Henry Clay and Daniel Webster died, until 1860, Douglas loomed larger than any other American politician. Pugnacious, arrogant, vituperative, and ferociously ambitious, he was, as a Southerner who served with him in the U.S. House recalled, “distinctly a man of large faculties.”¹²³ He had a knack for convincing all whom he met that he was their “frank, personal friend.”¹²⁴ He “knew who were his friends, and confided in them. In all his public career he never forgot a friend, and never failed to serve him in an emergency if within his power. His friends realized this, and in turn gave him similar confidence and support.” He “was genial and cordial, interested in everything that concerned those with whom he came in contact, to such a degree as to make them feel that he was one of them.”¹²⁵ A journalist who accompanied Douglas on a campaign swing reported that he “can talk religion with the priests as well as politics with the statesman.” At train stations where they stopped, “more regularly than the conductor, Mr. Douglas is on the platform with a good-bye to the leaving, and a welcome to the departing

¹²¹ Illinois Daily Journal (Springfield), 11 September 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:229-30. This is the only 1854 editorial that Roy P. Basler and his fellow editors included in their edition of Lincoln’s works.

¹²² Ezra M. Prince, “A Day with Lincoln,” Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. See Nevins, “Stephen A. Douglas: His Weaknesses and His Greatness,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 42 (1949): 385-410.

¹²³ Henry W. Hilliard, Politics and Pen Pictures at Home and Abroad (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1892), 129.

¹²⁴ A friend recalling Douglas as a young man, quoted in Johannsen, Douglas, 24.

¹²⁵ Clark E. Carr, Stephen A. Douglas: His Life, Public Services, Speeches and Patriotism (Chicago: McClurg, 1909), 42-43.

traveler – a shake of the hand with one man that stands at the depot and the touch of the hat to another. He knows everybody; can tell the question that affects each locality; calls the name of every farm-owner on the way.”¹²⁶ Douglas’s overflowing energy and uncommon industriousness led people to call him “a steam engine in britches.”¹²⁷ He had “a ‘magnetism’ about him almost irresistible.” He could be very persuasive, with a “hail-fellow-well-met” manner: “He was pleasant in conversation, and toward those he liked and wanted to persuade he was full of blandishment. He would sit on their laps, and clap them on their backs.” Though short (five feet four inches), he had a imposing presence, for he was “broad-shouldered and muscular” with “a most massive and intellectual head, crowned with thick black hair,” eyes “quite bright,” and a mouth and chin bespeaking “great firmness.”¹²⁸ He thus became known as “the Little Giant.”

Lincoln referred to him as Judge Douglas, for he had served on the Illinois state supreme court briefly. There he scandalized older members of the bar for his lack of dignity. At lunch he would occasionally “sit down on a brother lawyer’s lap and rattle away about politics and past times, for it was hard for him to forget his electioneering traits.”¹²⁹

Douglas’s “boyish appearance, his ready wit, his fine memory, his native rhetoric,” and “above all his suavity and heartiness, made him a favorite” among his colleagues in Congress and with millions of voters. “Many a time have I watched him,” said John W. Forney, editor of the Philadelphia Press, “leading in the keen encounters of the bright intellects around the festive board. To see him threading the glittering crowd with a pleasant smile or a kind word for every

¹²⁶ A Massachusetts editor quoted in Gerald M. Capers, Stephen A. Douglas: Defender of the Union (Boston: Little, Brown, 1959), 13-14.

¹²⁷ Milton, Eve of Conflict, 5.

¹²⁸ Thomas J. McCormack, ed., Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896 (2 vols.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1909), 1:449.

¹²⁹ Usher F. Linder, Reminiscences of the Early Bench and Bar of Illinois (Chicago: Chicago Legal News, 1879), 142-43.

body, one would have taken him for a trained courtier.” But, Forney observed, “he was more at home in the close and exciting thicket of men.” There he was truly in his element. “To call each one by name, sometimes by his Christian name; to stand in the centre of a listening throng, while he told some Western story or defended some public measure; to exchange jokes with a political adversary; or, ascending the rostrum, to hold thousands spell-bound for hours, as he poured forth torrents of characteristic eloquence – these were traits that raised up for him hosts who were ready to fight for him.” Under his banner “eminent men were ready to take their stand,” and “riper scholars than himself, older if not better statesmen, frankly acknowledged his leadership and faithfully followed his fortunes.”¹³⁰ Forney’s colleague John Russell Young praised Douglas as “a man of great nature,” the “most buoyant of Americans, full of life and aggressiveness and animal vigor, a man of the multitude,” the “most gifted, the most popular, the most strenuous of Democratic statesmen, the most accomplished debater in America, quick, apt, ready, irrepressible.”¹³¹

With equal justice, Douglas’s detractors called him egotistical, belligerent, scornful, quarrelsome, demagogic, unscrupulous, shifty, brash, haughty, impudent, vituperative, partisan, vindictive, humorless, coarse, vulgar, profane, and morally obtuse. Young deplored his “insane yearning for immediate success” and his willingness to truckle to Southern slaveholders: “He believed in the rowdy virtue of American politics, and had much of the rowdy in his nature.”¹³² Horace White thought him “patriotic beyond a doubt,” but “color blind to moral principles in politics, and if not stone blind to the evils of slavery was deaf and dumb to any expression

¹³⁰ John W. Forney, Anecdotes of Public Men (2 vols.; New York : Harper & Brothers, 1873-1881), 1:146-47.

¹³¹ John Russell Young’s autobiography, manuscript, Young Papers, Library of Congress.

¹³² John Russell Young’s autobiography, manuscript, Young Papers, Library of Congress; New York Tribune, 6 September 1866. Cf. Nevins, “Stephen A. Douglas: His Weaknesses and His Greatness,” 399-410.

concerning them.”¹³³ The Little Giant’s friends admired “his pluck, his skill, his readiness, his indomitable will, his audacity,” but they lacked “confidence in his moral principle.”¹³⁴ Carl Schurz, who observed the Little Giant in 1854 senate debates, recalled that his sentences “went straight to the mark like bullets, and sometimes like cannon-balls, tearing and crashing.” It was hard, Schurz thought, “to surpass his clearness and force of statement when his position was right; or his skill at twisting logic or in darkening the subject with extraneous, unessential matter, when he was wrong; or his defiant tenacity when he was driven to defend himself. Or his keen and crafty alertness to turn his defense into attack, so that, even when overwhelmed with adverse argument, he would issue from the fray with the air of the conqueror.” To “the feelings of his opponents” he was “utterly unsparing.” He “would nag and nettle them with disdainful words of challenge, and insult them with such names as ‘dastards’ and ‘traitors.’ Nothing could equal the contemptuous scorn, the insolent curl of his lip with which, in the debates to which I listened, he denounced the anti-slavery men in Congress as ‘the Abolition confederates,’ and at a subsequent time, after the formation of the Republican party, as ‘Black Republicans.’” Worse still, “he would, with utter unscrupulousness, malign his opponents’ motives, distort their sayings, and attribute to them all sorts of iniquitous deeds or purposes of which he must have known them to be quite guiltless.” His “style of attack was sometimes so exasperatingly offensive, that it required, on the part of the anti-slavery men in the Senate, a very high degree of self-control to abstain from retaliating.” Schurz never saw “a more formidable parliamentary pugilist” in whom “there was something . . . which very strongly smacked of the bar-room. He was the idol of the rough element of his party, and his convivial association with that element left its unmistakable

¹³³ Horace White, The Lincoln and Douglas Debates: An Address before the Chicago Historical Society, February 17, 1914 (pamphlet; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1914), 8.

¹³⁴ “Lincoln and Douglas – A Contrast,” Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 30 June 1860.

imprint upon his habits and his deportment.” The Little Giant “would sometimes offend the dignity of the Senate by his astonishing conduct. Once, at a night session of the Senate I saw him, after a boisterous speech, throw himself upon the lap of a brother senator and loll there, talking and laughing, for ten or fifteen minutes, with his arm around the neck of his friend, who seemed to be painfully embarrassed, but could or would not shake him off.”¹³⁵

A journalist offered a similar description of Douglas’s attack on senatorial rivals in an 1854 speech that “offended the dignity of the Senate and the nation.” The Little Giant abused colleagues so mercilessly that “it seemed there could be no fitting termination to it but by a general bar-room melee and knock-down.” His language and tone were “wholly alien to that body, and disgraceful alike to it and to him that it was indulged in.”¹³⁶ In 1856, the Little Giant rebuked Charles Sumner, saying: “Is his object to provoke some of us to kick him as we would a dog in the street, that he may get sympathy upon the just chastisement?”¹³⁷ (Two days later, South Carolina Congressman Preston Brooks, wielding a heavy cane, cudgelled Sumner into insensibility on the senate floor.) Such conduct earned Douglas the reputation of “a bully who only insults peaceable men.”¹³⁸ Douglas taunted New York Senator William Henry Seward, saying: “Ah, you can’t crawl behind that free nigger ‘dodge.’” According to a reporter covering the senate, Douglas “always uses the word ‘nigger’ and not ‘negro’ as it appears in his printed

¹³⁵ The Reminiscences of Carl Schurz (3 vols.; New York: McClure, 1907-08), 2:30-32. Another German American political leader, Gustave Koerner, offered a similar description of Douglas: “his massive form supported his ample head, covered with a thick growth of black hair. His deep-set, dark blue eyes shed their luster under his heavy brows. The features of his firm, round face were wonderfully expressive of the workings of his feelings. Calm in stating facts, passionate when attacked, disdainful when he was forced to defend, his gestures were sometimes violent, and often exceptionally so. His voice was strong, but not modulated. Bold in his assertions, maledictory in his attacks, impressive in language, not caring to persuade, but intent to force the assent of his hearers, he was the Danton, not the Mirebeau, of oratory. He was certainly at the time the most practical and formidable debater amongst our public men.” Koerner, Memoirs, 2:59-60.

¹³⁶ Washington correspondence by James Shepherd Pike, 4 March, New York Tribune, 7 March 1854.

¹³⁷ Johannsen, Douglas, 503.

¹³⁸ Chicago correspondence, 1 September, New York Tribune, 9 September 1860.

speeches.” (Seward told the Little Giant, “no man who spells Negro with two gs will ever be elected President of the United States.”) The journalist informed his readers that only “those who know Douglas, or who heard him, can be aware of his low ‘Short Boy’ style of speaking. His sneering tone and vulgar grimaces must be heard and seen rather than described.”¹³⁹ In 1858, the journalist E. L. Godkin termed Douglas “a model demagogue,” who “is vulgar in his habits and vulgar in his appearance, ‘takes a drink,’ chews his quid, and discharges his saliva with as much constancy and energy as the least pretentious of his constituents.”¹⁴⁰ Douglas’s questionable taste manifested itself in his remarks about the premature death of President Zachary Taylor: “It was the hand of Providence that saved us from our first and only military administration. Taylor was gathered to his fathers.”¹⁴¹

Earlier in his career, Douglas offended the House as well as the senate. In 1844, John Quincy Adams described him delivering a vehement speech in the lower chamber. As he defended a committee report, Douglas “raved out his hour in abusive invectives upon the members who had pointed out its slanders, and upon the Whig party.” Douglas’s “face was convulsed, his gesticulation frantic, and he lashed himself into such a heat that if his body had been made of combustible matter it would have burnt out. In the midst of his roaring, to save himself from choking, he stripped off and cast away his cravat, unbuttoned his waistcoat, and

¹³⁹ Washington correspondence, 4 March, New York Tribune, 7 March 1854; Glyndon G. Van Deusen, William Henry Seward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 153. The passage referred to was officially reported thus: “He cannot shelter himself, therefore, under the free-negro dodge.” James W. Sheahan, The Life of Stephen A. Douglas (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1860), 239.

¹⁴⁰ Godkin, dispatch of 13 July 1858, Rollo Ogden, ed., Life and Letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1907), 1:178.

¹⁴¹ Douglas’s speech at Richmond, Virginia, 9 July 1852, copy, George Fort Milton Papers, Library of Congress.

had the air and aspect of a half-naked pugilist.” Old Man Eloquent wrote in astonishment: “this man comes from a judicial bench, and passes for an eloquent orator!”¹⁴²

Douglas’s greatest asset was his prowess in debate. Congressman Isaac N. Arnold called him the U.S. senate’s “leading debater” in the 1850s: “He had been accustomed to meet for years in Congress the trained leaders of the nation, and never, either in single combat, or taking the fire of a whole party, had he been discomfited.” He “was bold, defiant, confident, aggressive; fertile in resources, terrible in denunciation, familiar with political history, practiced in all controversial discussion, of indomitable physical and moral courage, and unquestionably the most formidable man in the nation on the stump.”¹⁴³ According to Arnold, the Little Giant “had a wonderful faculty of extracting from his associates, from experts, and others, by conversation, all they knew of a subject he was to discuss, and then making it so thoroughly his, that all seemed to have originated with himself.”¹⁴⁴

In 1860, a Massachusetts journalist described Douglas as “a chunky man” who “looks like a prize fighter.” He possessed “excellent prize fighting qualities. Pluck, quickness and strength; adroitness in shifting his positions, avoiding his adversary’s blows, and hitting him in unexpected places in return.” Douglas’s “strong point is his will to have his own way.” Withal, he was “a plucky, hard, unscrupulous, conscienceless fellow, who will be a hard man to meet in debate.”¹⁴⁵ The Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican maintained that Douglas’s “main power lies in his appeals to the passions and the lower instincts of the mob,” especially its racial

¹⁴² Charles Francis Adams, ed., Memoirs of John Quincy Adams, Comprising Portions of His Diary from 1795 to 1848 (12 vols.; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1874-77), 11:510-11 (diary entry for 14 February 1844).

¹⁴³ Isaac N. Arnold, remarks in the House of Representatives, Washington Chronicle, 21 March 1864.

¹⁴⁴ Isaac N. Arnold, “Reminiscences of the Illinois Bar Forty Years Ago: Lincoln and Douglas as Orators and Lawyers” (pamphlet; Chicago: Fergus, 1881), 20.

¹⁴⁵ Boston correspondence by “Warrington” [William Stevens Robinson], 19 July, Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 20 July 1860.

prejudices.¹⁴⁶ A fellow senator, William Pitt Fessenden of Maine, said of Douglas: “You may drop him in the middle of a morass, from which escape seems impossible, and before your back is turned he will have built a corduroy road across it, and be out again and at you harder than ever.”¹⁴⁷

Lincoln shared this view, telling a friend that it was “impossible to get the advantage” of Douglas, for “even if he is worsted, he so bears himself that the people are bewildered and uncertain as to who has the better of it.”¹⁴⁸ In 1854, Lincoln said of Douglas’s debating style: “It was a great trick among some public speakers to hurl a naked absurdity at his audience, with such confidence that they should be puzzled to know if the speaker didn’t see some point of great magnitude in it which entirely escaped their observation. A neatly varnished sophism would be readily penetrated, but a great, rough non sequitur was sometimes twice as dangerous as a well polished fallacy.”¹⁴⁹ In 1856, Harriet Beecher Stowe made a similar point after witnessing Douglas clash with senatorial opponents: “His chief forte in debating is his power of mystifying the point. With the most off-hand assured airs in the world, and a certain appearance of honest superiority, like one who has a regard for you and wishes to set you right on one or two little matters, he proceeds to set up some point which is not that in question, but only a family connection of it, and this point he attacks with the very best of logic and language; he charges upon it horse and foot, runs it down, tramples it in the dust, and thus turns upon you with – ‘Sir, there’s your argument! didn’t I tell you so? you see it’s all stuff;’ and if you have allowed yourself to be so dazzled by this quickness as to forget that the routed point is not after all the

¹⁴⁶ “Lincoln and Douglas – A Contrast,” Springfield, Massachusetts, Republican, 30 June 1860.

¹⁴⁷ Horace White, “Abraham Lincoln’s Rise to Greatness,” New York Evening Post, 13 February 1909.

¹⁴⁸ William M. Dickson, “Abraham Lincoln in Cincinnati,” Harper’s New Monthly Magazine 69 (June 1884): 64.

¹⁴⁹ Speech at Chicago, 27 October 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:283.

one in question, you suppose all is over with it.” In addition, Mrs. Stowe said, “he contrives to mingle up so many stinging allusions to so many piquant personalities, so many fillips upon sore and sensitive places, that by the time he has done his mystification a dozen others are ready and burning to spring on their feet to repel some direct or indirect attack, all equally wide of the point. His speeches, instead of being like an arrow sent at a mark, resemble rather a bomb which hits nothing in particular, but bursts and send red-hot nails in every direction.” Mrs. Stowe thought it “a merciful providence that with all his alertness and adroitness, all his quick-sighted keenness, Douglas is not witty – that might have made him too irresistible a demagogue for the liberties of our laughter-loving people, to whose weaknesses he is altogether too well adapted now.” The Republicans, she concluded, “have pitted against them a leader infinite in resources, artful, adroit, and wholly unscrupulous.”¹⁵⁰

Douglas regarded the 1854 Illinois legislative and congressional campaigns as a referendum on both the Kansas-Nebraska Act and his leadership.¹⁵¹ He had accurately predicated in January that in the North “I shall be assailed . . . without stint or moderation. Every opprobrious epithet will be applied to me. I shall be, probably, hung in effigy in many places.”¹⁵² To vindicate himself, he returned from Washington late in the summer to speak on behalf of Democratic candidates, especially Thomas L. Harris, who was challenging Lincoln’s friend, Congressman Richard Yates. When Yates announced his intention of retiring, Lincoln urged him to seek reelection.¹⁵³ Yates recalled Lincoln saying that “though he could not promise me success in a district so largely against us, yet he hoped for the sake of the principle, I would run,

¹⁵⁰ Washington correspondence by Harriet Beecher Stowe, n.d., New York Independent, 1 May 1856.

¹⁵¹ Johannsen, Douglas, 454-61.

¹⁵² Archibald Dixon to Henry S. Foote, 1 October 1858, in Mrs. Archibald Dixon, True History, 445.

¹⁵³ Jack Nortrup, “Lincoln and Yates: The Climb to Power,” Lincoln Herald 73 (1971): 242-54.

and if I would, he would take the stump in my behalf. I remember his earnestness, and so deeply did he implore me that the question was one worthy of our noblest efforts whether in victory or defeat, that I consented.”¹⁵⁴ (When political leaders sounded him out regarding a bid for Yates’s seat, Lincoln “seemed gratified by the compliment” but refused, saying: “No, Yates has been a true and faithful Representative, and should be returned.”)¹⁵⁵ To help fend off Harris’s challenge, Lincoln took to the hustings in August shortly after the announcement of Yates’s candidacy for reelection.¹⁵⁶ The following month, a Chicago editor reported that “Lincoln tells me that Yates is on ‘praying ground’ in his District. Lincoln canvasses it with & for him.”¹⁵⁷

Acting as Yates’s campaign manager, Lincoln urged others, including the anti-Nebraska Democrat John M. Palmer, to stump for the incumbent congressman. “You know how anxious I am that this Nebraska measure shall be rebuked and condemned every where,” Lincoln wrote Palmer on September 7. He added that if the Democrats had nominated Palmer instead of Harris, Lincoln would not have opposed him: “I should have been quiet, happy that Nebraska was to be rebuked at all events. I still should have voted for the whig candidate; but I should have made no speeches, written no letters. And you would have been elected by at least a thousand

¹⁵⁴ Lincoln to Yates, Springfield, 18 August 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:256; Yates’s speech in Springfield, 20 November 1860, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 22 November 1860. In late September, it was reported that Douglas’s “attention will be confined entirely to Yates’ district, where there seems to be the greatest need of his influence.” Alton Telegraph, 29 September 1854.

¹⁵⁵ Recollections of Paul Selby, in Francis Fisher Browne, The Every-Day Life of Abraham Lincoln (2nd ed.; New York: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1913), 158-60.

¹⁵⁶ Lincoln to George Shaw, Springfield, 27 July 1854, Roy P. Basler and Christian Basler, eds., Collected Works of Lincoln, Second Supplement, 1848-1865 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 8-9; speeches at Winchester and Carrollton, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:226-27.

¹⁵⁷ Robert L. Wilson to Elihu B. Washburne, Chicago, 19 September 1854, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

majority.”¹⁵⁸ (Palmer, according to Clark E. Carr, was “a broad-minded man, – too good a lawyer to be a great statesman, and too able a statesman to be a great lawyer.”)¹⁵⁹

Lincoln helped Yates plot campaign strategy. To counter rumors that the congressman was a nativist bigot, Lincoln drafted a letter for him to circulate.¹⁶⁰ (Yates ignored the advice and later acknowledged that his failure to heed Lincoln probably cost him the election.)¹⁶¹ Anti-foreign, anti-Catholic sentiment was sweeping the North, in some states becoming the dominant theme in 1854. Supporters of this movement, called Native Americans or Know Nothings, adopted the slogan, “Americans must rule America.” They believed that Catholicism was incompatible with America’s democratic, individualistic values; that Catholics had disproportionate power; that established political parties and professional politicians were corrupt and unresponsive to the popular will; that slavery and liquor were evil; and that immigrants were the source of crime, corruption, pauperism, wage reductions, voter fraud, and the defeat of antislavery candidates.¹⁶²

When Know Nothings in Springfield asked Lincoln if they could run him for the state legislature, he refused. One of the party’s leaders, Richard H. Ballinger, and two colleagues visited Lincoln’s law office, where they were received “with characteristic kindness.” In response to their request that he accept the Native Americans’ nomination, Lincoln “stated that he had belonged to the old Whig party and must continue to do so until a better one arose to take its place. He could not become identified with the American party – they might vote for him if

¹⁵⁸ Lincoln to John M. Palmer, Springfield, 7 September 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:228.

¹⁵⁹ Clark E. Carr, The Illini: A Story of the Prairies (8th ed.; Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1912), 175.

¹⁶⁰ Lincoln to Yates, Naples, 30 October 1854, and 1 November [31 October] 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:284-85.

¹⁶¹ Yates to Isaac N. Arnold, 17 June 1869, in Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:284n.

¹⁶² Anbinder, Nativism and Slavery, 103-26.

they wanted to; so might the Democrats; yet he was not in sentiment with this new party.”

Lincoln asked “who the native Americans were. ‘Do they not,’ he said, ‘wear the breech-clout and carry the tomahawk? We pushed them from their homes and now turn upon others not fortunate enough to come over as early as we or our forefathers. Gentlemen of the committee, your party is wrong in principle.’” He added humorously: “When this Know-nothing party first came up, I had an Irishman, Patrick by name, hoeing in my garden. One morning I was there with him, and he said, ‘Mr. Lincoln, what about the Know-nothings?’ I explained that they would possibly carry a few elections and disappear, and I asked Pat why he was not born in this country. ‘Faith, Mr. Lincoln,’ he replied, ‘I wanted to be, but my mother wouldn’t let me.’”¹⁶³

In September, Lincoln debated John Calhoun, who alleged that the Whig and Know Nothing parties were acting in concert. Lincoln denied any knowledge of the latter and expressed doubt that it even existed.¹⁶⁴ The following year, he condemned the Know Nothings in an eloquent private letter to his old friend Joshua Speed, who had asked where Lincoln stood politically now that the Whigs were defunct. “I am not a Know Nothing,” he declared. “That is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes, be in favor of degrading classes of white people? Our progress in degeneracy appears to me pretty rapid. As a nation, we began by declaring that ‘all men are created equal.’ We now practically read it ‘all men are created equal, except negroes, and foreigners, and catholics.’ When it comes to this I should prefer emigrating to some country where they make no pretence of loving liberty – to

¹⁶³ R. H. Ballinger’s reminiscences, Seattle Post-Intelligencer, n.d., copied in the Los Angeles Times, 20 June 1894. Born in 1833 in Knox County, Kentucky, Ballinger moved to Illinois in 1848. In 1856, he was a delegate to the Republican national convention. During the Civil War he served as colonel of Third Illinois Cavalry. After the war he became editor and proprietor of the Larned Chronoscope. When he called on Lincoln, Ballinger was accompanied by John Wolgamot, Sr., of Lick Creek, who served as a delegate to the 1860 Sangamon County Republican convention. Born in Pennsylvania in 1791, Wolgamot settled in Springfield in 1837 and died there in 1865. On nativism in Illinois, see John P. Senning, “The Know-Nothing Movement in Illinois,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 7 (1914): 9-33.

¹⁶⁴ This took place on September 9. Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:229.

Russia, for instance, where despotism can be taken pure, without the base alloy of hypocrisy.”¹⁶⁵

To another close friend Lincoln “avowed that if the K[now] N[othing] movement was successful, that he could be no longer of any use to his fellow men in politics.”¹⁶⁶

One day when Lincoln was out of town, Springfield Whigs nominated him for the General Assembly, much to the dismay of his wife. When she read a press account indicating that he was being put forward for the state House of Representatives, she rushed to the newspaper’s offices and ordered her husband’s name stricken from the list of candidates. Later, when William Jayne called seeking permission to reinstate Lincoln’s name, he found the potential candidate “the saddest man I ever saw – the gloomiest.” Lincoln, nearly in tears, paced the floor, resisting Jayne’s blandishments by saying, “No – I can’t – you don’t know all. I say you don’t begin to know one half and that’s enough.”¹⁶⁷ According to Henry C. Whitney, it “was Mrs. Lincoln’s opposition which so much disturbed him. She insisted in her imperious way that he must now go to the United States Senate, and that it was a degradation to run him for the Legislature.”¹⁶⁸ Lincoln told a friend: “I only allowed myself to be elected, because it was supposed my doing so would help Yates.”¹⁶⁹

*

¹⁶⁵ Lincoln to Speed, Springfield, 24 August 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:323.

¹⁶⁶ David Davis to Julius Rockwell, Bloomington, Illinois, 27 December 1855, Rockwell Papers, Lenox Public Library, Lenox, Massachusetts.

¹⁶⁷ Statement by Jayne, 15 August 1866, Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 266.

¹⁶⁸ Henry C. Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, vol. 1 of A Life of Lincoln, ed. Marion Mills Miller, 2 vols. (New York: Baker and Taylor, 1908), 150. Thomas Dent, a friend of Lincoln, said: “My impression is that Mrs. Lincoln was understood to wish to have Mr. Lincoln stand for a higher office.” She and her husband may also have realized that he was ineligible to hold state office because in 1842 he had accepted Shields’ challenge to a duel. The Illinois constitution of 1848 forbade anyone issuing or accepting such a challenge from holding state office. Thomas Dent to William E. Barton, Chicago, 15 and 31 December 1921, Barton Papers, University of Chicago. Mrs. Lincoln was not the only wife who objected to her husband’s running for a legislative seat. When Daniel M. Barringer, former U.S. minister to Spain, ran for the North Carolina legislature, his wife protested that she was “mortified” that he would seek such an inferior post after serving as an important diplomat. Holt, Whig Party, 853.

¹⁶⁹ Lincoln to Elihu N. Powell, Springfield, 27 November 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:289.

For the hustings Lincoln prepared a long speech arraigning Douglas, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and slavery with a passionate eloquence that heralded the emergence of a statesman. Like a butterfly arising from a caterpillar's chrysalis, the partisan politico of the 1830s and 1840s was transformed. Abandoning his earlier "slasher-gaff" style, from now on he would speak with authority as a principled, articulate, high-minded champion of the antislavery cause. As he stumped through Illinois in 1854, he dissected Douglas's popular sovereignty doctrine with surgical precision, forceful logic, and deep moral conviction.

Lincoln had planned to debate Douglas, just as he had done on earlier occasions. In September, the Little Giant was to speak in Bloomington, where a leading Whig, Jesse W. Fell, proposed that he share time with Lincoln. "No, I won't do it!" Douglas exclaimed. "I come to Chicago, and there I am met by an old line abolitionist; I come down to the center of the State, and I am met by an old line Whig; I go to the south end of the State, and I am met by an anti-administration Democrat. I can't hold the abolitionist responsible for what the Whig says; I can't hold the Whig responsible for what the abolitionist says, and I can't hold either responsible for what the Democrat says. It looks like dogging a man over the State. This is my meeting; the people have come to hear me, and I want to talk to them."¹⁷⁰ (Fear of Lincoln's ability as a debater may have led Douglas to reject Fell's suggestion. In October, the Little Giant told a friend: "I have known Lincoln for many years, and I have continually met him in debate. I regard him as the most difficult and dangerous opponent that I have ever met.")¹⁷¹ Lincoln sympathized

¹⁷⁰ James S. Ewing, speech at the banquet of the Illinois Schoolmasters' Club, Bloomington, Illinois, 12 February 1909, in Isaac N. Phillips, ed., Abraham Lincoln, by Some Men Who Knew Him (1910; Chicago: Americana House, 1950), 44. Douglas said much the same thing at Peoria in October. Peoria Daily Union, 20 October 1854, in B. C. Bryner, Abraham Lincoln in Peoria, Illinois (2nd ed.; Peoria: Lincoln Historical Publishing Company, 1926), 143-44. In northern Illinois he was challenged by Ichabod Coddington, who followed him from place to place, answering the Little Giant's arguments. Howard, "Illinois Republican Party," 142-44.

¹⁷¹ In 1891, William C. Goudy (1824-93) told this to Francis Lynde Stetson, who in turn told it to Horace White in 1908. Stetson to White, New York, 7 December 1908, in Horace White, The Life of Lyman Trumbull (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1913), 40n. Goudy, a lawyer who in 1856 won election to the state senate from Fulton County,

with Douglas's position and that evening replied to the speech that Douglas had given in the afternoon.¹⁷² Lincoln's remarks prefigured the memorable address he would deliver at Springfield and Peoria a few days later.¹⁷³

While in Bloomington, Lincoln attended a reception at Douglas's hotel suite, where the Little Giant offered liquor to his callers. When Lincoln declined, Douglas asked:

“What, do you belong to a temperance society?”

“No, I don't belong to any temperance society, but I am temperate in this that I don't drink anything.”¹⁷⁴ Douglas may have been taunting Lincoln with a subtle allusion to the temperance movement, whose champions were running candidates for public office.¹⁷⁵ Although he had spoken on behalf of temperance in 1842, Lincoln did not participate in the Illinois anti-alcohol crusade of the mid-1850s.

Douglas was not Lincoln's only sparring partner. In early September at the Springfield court house, John Calhoun defended the Kansas-Nebraska Act and was reportedly “well received by a large audience. Lincoln followed to a thin house.”¹⁷⁶

became a state's attorney in 1853 and a “warm friend of Douglas.” Douglas allegedly made this remark on October 15 at Goudy's home in Lewiston, where he spent the night. Bryner, Lincoln in Peoria, 302; Herringshaw's Encyclopedia of American Biography of the Nineteenth Century (Chicago: American Publishers' Association, 1906), 412. Goudy offered Douglas political advice in the 1858 campaign. Goudy to Douglas, Monmouth, Illinois, 31 March 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

¹⁷² Statement by Jesse W. Fell, Normal, Illinois, 1882, in The Lincoln Memorial: Album-Immortelles, ed. Osborn H. Oldroyd (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1883), 471.

¹⁷³ Brinton Webb Woodward, “Squatter Sovereignty – Lincoln and Douglas: An Interesting Reminiscence,” Lawrence, Kansas, Daily Journal, 24 September 1879, reproduced in Mark A. Plummer, “Lincoln's First Direct Reply to Douglas on Squatter Sovereignty Recalled,” Lincoln Herald 71 (1969): 27-32.

¹⁷⁴ James S. Ewing, in Walter B. Stevens, A Reporter's Lincoln, ed. Michael Burlingame (1916; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 60.

¹⁷⁵ Potter, Impending Crisis, 249.

¹⁷⁶ John Moore to Mason Brayman, Springfield, 11 September 1854, Brayman Papers, Chicago History Museum. Moore was a Democrat.

The following month, Lincoln responded to Douglas in Springfield, where thousands of Illinoisans had flocked to attend the state fair. There the Little Giant defended his record and asserted that the defection of anti-Nebraska Democrats could not defeat his party: “I tell you the time has not yet come when a handful of traitors in our camp can turn the great State of Illinois, with all her glorious history and traditions, into a negro-worshipping, negro-equality community.”¹⁷⁷ Sitting directly before Douglas, Lincoln listened “attentively, with an intention that was easily divined by all.”¹⁷⁸ At the close of the Little Giant’s speech, he announced to the crowd that Trumbull might reply to it the following day, but in case the senator could not do so, Lincoln would.¹⁷⁹

When a friend opined that it would be hard to respond to the Little Giant’s speech, Lincoln replied: “No, it won’t. Douglas lied; he lied three times and I’ll prove it!”¹⁸⁰ The next afternoon, in Trumbull’s absence, Lincoln did so before an unusually large crowd at the state house. (He repeated this address twelve days later in Peoria and wrote it out for publication. It became known as the Peoria Speech, though it is evident that he delivered virtually the same remarks at Springfield.)¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁷ *Check roger bridges’ transcripts

¹⁷⁸ “Personal Reminiscences of the Late Abraham Lincoln by a contributor to the ‘Bulletin,’” San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin, 22 April 1865. The author said that he knew Lincoln “in his intercourse with men in several counties of the State.”

¹⁷⁹ Memorandum by Samuel S. Gilbert of Carlinville, Illinois, copy, George Fort Milton Papers, Library of Congress. Another observer recalled that Trumbull was announced as the speaker with no mention of Lincoln as a substitute in case the senator was unable to attend. “Personal Reminiscences of the Late Abraham Lincoln by a contributor to the ‘Bulletin,’” San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin, 22 April 1865.

¹⁸⁰ John W. Bunn told this to Jacob Thompson. Thompson to Albert J. Beveridge, Springfield, 15 February 1927, Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress. When Bunn gave an interview about that event, he did not use the word “lie,” but Thompson insisted that “Mr. Bunn told me more than once that Mr. Lincoln used the word ‘lie’ on this occasion.” See Bunn’s interview with Jesse W. Weik, Springfield, 21 November 1916, in Jesse W. Weik, The Real Lincoln: A Portrait, ed. Michael Burlingame (1922; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 323.

¹⁸¹ A summary of the Springfield speech and the text of the Peoria speech appear in Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:240-83. Summaries of speeches given in Bloomington in September and in Winchester and Carrollton in August indicate that he delivered a version of the same speech in those towns. Basler, ed., Collected Works of

Lincoln had prepared his remarks with special care. According to the Springfield Register, he “had been nosing for weeks in the state library, and pumping his brains and his imagination for points and arguments with which to demolish the champion of popular sovereignty.”¹⁸² Among the books he evidently read which influenced his thinking was Leonard Bacon’s Slavery Discussed in Occasional Essays from 1833 to 1846, in which the author, a Congregational minister, declared: “if those laws of the southern states, by virtue of which slavery exists there, and is what it is, are not wrong – nothing is wrong.”¹⁸³ (In 1864, Lincoln would famously write: “If slavery is not wrong, nothing is wrong.”)¹⁸⁴

In this speech, his first oratorical masterpiece, Lincoln offered a comprehensive analysis and denunciation of slavery and its apologists.¹⁸⁵ Before getting to the substance of his address, he graciously “said that he should not assail the motives and not impeach the honesty of any man who voted for the Nebraska Bill, much less, his distinguished friend, Judge Douglas.” He gave Douglas “credit for honesty of intention and true patriotism – referring whatever of wrong he might happen to find among his actions, entirely to mistaken sense of duty.” He invited the Little Giant to point out any mistakes he might make in recounting the history of the slavery controversy; Douglas consented to do so.

Lincoln, 2:226-27, 230-83. In discussing the Springfield speech, I have relied most heavily on the text of the Peoria address but have also used some of the accounts of the Springfield address.

¹⁸² Illinois State Register (Springfield), 6 October 1854.

¹⁸³ Hugh Davis, Leonard Bacon: New England Reformer and Antislavery Moderate (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998); Leonard Bacon, Slavery Discussed in Occasional Essays, from 1833 to 1846 (New York: Baker and Scribner, 1846), x. In 1864, Lincoln told Joseph P. Thompson, “I read that book some years ago, and at first did not exactly know what to make of it; but afterwards I read it over more carefully, and got hold of Dr. Bacon’s distinctions, and it had much to do with shaping my own thinking on the subject of slavery. He is quite a man.” Thompson, “A Talk with President Lincoln,” The Congregationalist and Boston Recorder, 30 March 1866, p. 51.

¹⁸⁴ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 7:281.

¹⁸⁵ Lewis E. Lehrman, Lincoln at Peoria: The Turning Point *

Lincoln made some bantering comments about Douglas and the Know Nothings. He found nothing unusual in Douglas's attacks on the nativists, for the senator already had 95% of the foreign-born voters on his side and no one could blame him for trying to win over the remaining 5%. (Douglas looked "grim as Mont Blanc" at this point.) Lincoln also addressed the Little Giant's claim that the Whig party had died. Pointing to the election returns in New England and Iowa, he observed that the Democratic party was "in a very bad way."¹⁸⁶

After these preliminaries, Lincoln traced the course of the slavery issue in American politics, showing how the Kansas-Nebraska Act was "wrong in its direct effect, letting slavery into Kansas and Nebraska – and wrong in its prospective principle, allowing it to spread to every other part of the wide world, where men can be found inclined to take it." Douglas often interrupted this historical survey to challenge Lincoln's accuracy, as he had been invited to do. When Lincoln suggested that the senator was not the true author of the Nebraska bill – that Lewis Cass in 1848 had, in his celebrated Nicholson letter, put forward the theory of popular sovereignty – the crowd laughed and applauded. Incensed, Douglas rose, shook his hair, and "looking much like a roused lion," said "in his peculiarly heavy voice which he uses with so much effect when he wishes to be impressive, 'No, Sir! I will tell you what was the origin of the Nebraska bill. It was this, Sir! God created man, and placed before him both good and evil, and left him free to choose for himself. That was the origin of the Nebraska bill.'" Lincoln, who "looked the picture of good nature and patience," smilingly replied: "I think it is a great honor to Judge Douglas that he was the first man to discover that fact." The audience once again burst out laughing, to the Little Giant's evident discomfiture.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Springfield correspondence by W., 4 October, Chicago Democrat, 9 October 1854.

¹⁸⁷ Collinsville, Illinois, correspondence by W., 15 June, New York Tribune, 26 June 1858; Springfield correspondence by W., 4 October, Chicago Journal, 9 October 1854.

Lincoln quoted from an 1849 speech in which Douglas had lauded the Compromise of 1820: “The Missouri Compromise had been in practical operation for about a quarter of a century, and had received the sanction and approbation of men of all parties in every section of the Union. It had allayed all sectional jealousies and irritations growing out of this vexed question, and harmonized and tranquilized the whole country. It had given to Henry Clay, as its prominent champion, the proud sobriquet of the ‘Great Pacificator’ and by that title and for that service, his political friends had repeatedly appealed to the people to rally under his standard, as a presidential candidate, as the man who had exhibited the patriotism and the power to suppress an unholy and treasonable agitation, and preserve the Union. He was not aware that any man or any party from any section of the Union, had ever urged as an objection to Mr. Clay, that he was the great champion of the Missouri Compromise. On the contrary, the effort was made by the opponents of Mr. Clay, to prove that he was not entitled to the exclusive merit of that great patriotic measure, and that the honor was equally due to others as well as to him, for securing its adoption – that it had its origin in the hearts of all patriotic men, who desired to preserve and perpetuate the blessings of our glorious Union – an origin akin that of the constitution of the United States, conceived in the same spirit of fraternal affection, and calculated to remove forever, the only danger, which seemed to threaten, at some distant day, to sever the social bond of union. All the evidences of public opinion at that day, seemed to indicate that this Compromise had been canonized in the hearts of the American people, as a sacred thing which no ruthless hand would ever be reckless enough to disturb.”

Lincoln said of Douglas’s 1849 speech: “It is powerful and eloquent; the language is choice and rich. I wish I was such a master of language as my friend, the Judge.”

Douglas interjected: “A first-rate speech. (Renewed applause.)”

In dealing with the 36° 30′ line established in the Missouri Compromise, Lincoln was asked by Douglas: “And you voted against extending that line, Mr. Lincoln?” (Laughter)

“Yes, sir, because I was in favor of running that line much further south. (Great applause.)” Turning to the Wilmot Proviso, Lincoln recounted that “the Judge introduced me to a particular friend of his, one Davy Wilmot, of Pennsylvania. (Laughter.)”

“I thought you would be fit associates, (great laughter)” quipped Douglas, to which Lincoln replied: “Well, in the end it proved we were, and I hope to convince this audience that we may be so yet. (Uproarious applause.)”¹⁸⁸

After sketching the historical background of the current crisis, Lincoln displayed intense moral conviction as he excoriated Douglas’s popular sovereignty doctrine. The senator had nothing to say about the morality of slavery, proclaiming that: “I do not know of any tribunal on earth that can decide the question of the morality of slavery or any other institution. I deal with slavery as a political question involving questions of public policy.”¹⁸⁹ (Douglas did not always eschew moral argument in politics. When attacking nativism, he said: “To proscribe a man in this country on account of his birthplace or religious faith is subversive of all our ideas and principles of civil and religious freedom. It is revolting to our sense of justice and right.”)¹⁹⁰

With unwonted vehemence, Lincoln denounced Douglas’s neutrality on such a burning moral issue: “This declared indifference, but as I must think, covert real zeal for the spread of slavery, I can not but hate.” Hate was a word Lincoln rarely used, but he repeated it in this address: “I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world – enables the enemies of free institutions, with

¹⁸⁸ Springfield correspondence by W., 4 October, Chicago Journal, 9 October 1854.

¹⁸⁹ Douglas, speech of 9 December 1857, Congressional Globe, 35th Congress, 1st session, 14-18; Robert W. Johannsen, ed., The Letters of Stephen A. Douglas (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1961), xxvi.

¹⁹⁰ Johannsen, Douglas, 446.

plausibility, to taunt us as hypocrites – causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many really good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty – criticizing the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but self-interest.”

Lincoln found slavery “monstrous” because, among other things, it represented the systematic theft of the fruits of hard labor, a kind of institutionalized robbery.¹⁹¹ In 1860, Lincoln remarked: “I always thought that the man who made the corn should eat the corn.”¹⁹² Thirteen years earlier, when first introduced to Ward Hill Lamon, he teased the younger man, a native of Virginia, about white Southerners’ aversion to hard work. When Lamon protested, Lincoln sarcastically replied: “Oh, yes; you Virginians shed barrels of perspiration while standing off at a distance and superintending the work your slaves do for you. It is different with us. Here it is every fellow for himself, or he doesn’t get there.”¹⁹³ (For the rest of his life, Lincoln was to stress this theme again and again, most memorably in his second inaugural address.)

After his repeated use of the word hate, Lincoln made a conciliatory gesture toward slaveholders. “I think I have no prejudice against the Southern people,” he said. “They are just what we would be in their situation. If slavery did not exist amongst them, they would not introduce it. If it did now exist amongst us, we should not instantly give it up.” He acknowledged that “some southern men do free their slaves, go north, and become tip-top abolitionists; while some northern ones go south, and become most cruel slave-masters.” Whenever southerners

¹⁹¹ See Burlingame, Inner World of Lincoln, 20-56. Henry C. Whitney said that the “basis of his hostility to slavery was his consciousness of its dishonesty, in exacting service for nothing, and of its injustice in coercing and enslaving men.” Whitney, Lincoln the Citizen, 174.

¹⁹² Cassius M. Clay in Allen Thorndike Rice, ed., Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln by Distinguished Men of His Time (New York: North American Review, 1886), 458.

¹⁹³ Ward Hill Lamon, Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847–1865, ed. Dorothy Lamon Teillard (2nd ed.; Washington: Published by the editor, 1911), 14–15.

assert that “they are no more responsible for the origin of slavery, than we; I acknowledge that fact. When it is said that the institution exists; and that it is very difficult to get rid of it, in any satisfactory way, I can understand and appreciate the saying.”

Lincoln confessed that he saw no easy solution to the problem of slavery. “If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do, as to the existing institution.” His “first impulse would be to free all the slaves, and send them to Liberia, – to their own native land.” Yet that was impractical: “whatever of high hope (as I think there is) there may be in this, in the long run, its sudden execution is impossible.” Should all such slaves “land there in a day, they would all perish in the next ten days.” Moreover, “there are not surplus shipping and surplus money enough in the world to carry them there in many times ten days.” If colonization was not feasible, what alternatives remained? “Free them all, and keep them among us as underlings?” It was not clear “that this betters their condition.” Still, Lincoln said, “I think I would not hold one in slavery.” What else could be done? “Free them, and make them politically and socially, our equals?” Lincoln confessed that “[m]y own feelings will not admit of this; and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of white people will not.” In a democracy, he added, a “universal feeling, whether well or ill-founded, can not be safely disregarded. We can not, then, make them equals.” Here he did not say that blacks are not the equals of whites; rather he implied that while they may be equal to whites in many respects, white prejudice will prevent blacks from being made equals – that is to say, given equal rights by the government – as long as it remained responsive to the wishes of the overwhelmingly white electorate.

In dealing with the controversial Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, which outraged many Northerners, Lincoln conceded that when Southerners “remind us of their constitutional rights, I acknowledge them, not grudgingly, but fairly; and I would give them any legislation for the

reclaiming of their fugitives, which should not, in its stringency, be more likely to carry a free man into slavery, than our ordinary criminal laws are to hang an innocent one.”

(While publicly supporting the fugitive slave act, Lincoln privately denounced it as “very obnoxious” and exclaimed that it was “ungodly! no doubt it is ungodly!”¹⁹⁴ A conductor on the underground railroad told a fellow abolitionist that Lincoln “was often a contributor to the funds needed for the protection of the fugitives.”¹⁹⁵ In 1843, Luther Ransom, a prominent Springfield abolitionist, reportedly said that Lincoln “always helps me when I call upon him for a man that is arrested as a runaway.”¹⁹⁶ In 1855, while discussing captured runaway slaves, Lincoln told his best friend, Joshua Speed: “I hate to see the poor creatures hunted down, and caught, and carried back to their stripes, and unrewarded toils.”¹⁹⁷ Five years later, when a leading abolitionist was jailed for resisting the Fugitive Slave Act, Lincoln recommended that the Republican party pay his fines.¹⁹⁸ As a lawyer, Lincoln avoided cases dealing with runaways because he was unwilling “to be a party to a violation of the Fugitive Slave Law, arguing that the way to overcome the difficulty was to repeal the law.”¹⁹⁹ And yet in 1857, Lincoln responded positively to the appeal

¹⁹⁴ Robert H. Browne, Abraham Lincoln and the Men of His Time (2 vols.; Cincinnati: Jennings and Pye, 1901), 1:517; Alonzo J. Grover’s reminiscences in Browne, Every-Day Life of Lincoln, 2nd ed., 248-49. Cf. Lincoln to Grover, Springfield, 15 January 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:514.

¹⁹⁵ Letter by Zebina Eastman, unidentified clipping, Eastman Scrapbook, Chicago History Museum. Cf. Eastman, “History of the Anti-Slavery Agitation, and the Growth of the Liberty and Republican Parties in the State of Illinois,” in Rufus Blanchard, Discovery and Conquests of the North-west, with the History of Chicago (Wheaton: R. Blanchard, 1879), 671. Eastman stated that he and Cassius Clay visited Erastus Wright, a wealthy client of Lincoln’s who served as an agent of the Underground Railroad. On Wright, see Richard E. Hart, “Lincoln’s Springfield: The Underground Railroad, Part 2,” For the People: A Newsletter of the Abraham Lincoln Association, vol. 8, no. 2 (Summer 1006): 1.

¹⁹⁶ Samuel Willard, “Personal Reminiscences of Life in Illinois, 1830-1850,” Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society 11 (1906): 86. On another occasion, Willard recalled Ransom saying “that Lincoln was not afraid of a negro case.” Willard, “My First Adventure with a Fugitive Slave,” manuscript, 19, Willard Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

¹⁹⁷ Lincoln to Speed, Springfield, 24 August 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:320.

¹⁹⁸ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 10 October 1860.

¹⁹⁹ John W. Bunn, statement made to Jesse W. Weik, in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 198. Cf. Lincoln to Salmon P. Chase, Springfield, 20 June 1859, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:386.

of a free black woman whose son faced enslavement in New Orleans. The incautious young man had worked on a steamboat and was seized in the Crescent City because he lacked free papers. Lincoln asked his old friend Alexander P. Field, then practicing law in New Orleans, to represent the young man, a native of Springfield, and offered to pay all costs. With William Herndon, he also called on Illinois Governor William Bissell, who alleged that he had no power to help rescue the unfortunate fellow. According to Herndon, his partner “exclaimed with some emphasis: ‘By God, Governor, I’ll make the ground in this country too hot for the foot of a slave, whether you have the legal power to secure the release of this boy or not.’” Thwarted at first by technical complications, Lincoln eventually raised money to procure the young man’s freedom.²⁰⁰ As president, he similarly tried to cut through red tape to save a young slave boy by offering to pay the owner up to \$500 for his freedom.)²⁰¹

After conceding that the Fugitive Slave Act should be faithfully enforced, Lincoln insisted that “all this, to my judgment, furnishes no more excuse for permitting slavery to go into our own free territory, than it would for reviving the African slave trade by law.” To Lincoln’s mind, the statute “which forbids the bringing of slaves from Africa; and that which has so long forbid[den] the taking [of] them to Nebraska, can hardly be distinguished on any moral principle.”

²⁰⁰ Annie E. Jonas to Herndon, Quincy, Illinois, 28 October 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 379-80; *Angle, ed., Herndon’s Lincoln, 308-9; Josiah G. Holland, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (Springfield, Mass.: Gurdon Bill, 1866), 127-28; Charles M. Segal, “Lincoln, Benjamin Jonas and the Black Code,” and “Postscript to ‘Black Code’ Article,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 46 (1953): 277-82, 428-30. The mother was Polly Mack, and she was brought to Lincoln by the Hincckels. Herndon told this to Caroline Dall in 1866. Dall, “Journal of a tour through Illinois, Wisconsin and Ohio, Oct. & Nov. 1866,” entry for 29 October 1866, Dall Papers, Bryn Mawr College.

²⁰¹ Lincoln to George Robertson, Washington, 20, 26 November 1862, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 5:502-3, 512-14. Cf. William H. Townsend, Lincoln and the Bluegrass: Slavery and Civil War in Kentucky (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1955), 299-304; Roy P. Basler, “‘Beef! Beef! Beef! Lincoln and Judge Robertson,” Abraham Lincoln Quarterly 6 (1951): 400-7; and J. Winston Coleman, Jr., “Lincoln and ‘Old Buster,’” Lincoln Herald 46 (1944): 3-9.

Lincoln indignantly rejected Douglas's justifications for repealing the Missouri Compromise, dismissing as an "absurdity" the contention that votes for the Wilmot Proviso showed that the Missouri Compromise had been abandoned in principle by supporters of that measure. Neither did the Compromise of 1850 vitiate the Missouri Compromise, for the former "had no more direct reference to Nebraska than it had to the territories of the moon." Douglas's contention that the original Nebraska bill, which he introduced on January 4 and which contained no reference to the Missouri Compromise, was no different from the revised version he submitted several days later, which repealed the Missouri Compromise, prompted a scornful response from Lincoln: "It is as if one should argue that white and black are not different." It was therefore obvious, Lincoln concluded, that "the public never demanded the repeal of the Missouri compromise."

More importantly, the abrogation of the Missouri Compromise was "manifestly unjust." The South and North had each made concessions in 1820; now the South wanted to renege on its end of the bargain while enjoying the benefits of the North's concession. To illustrate this point, Lincoln employed one of his favorite images, a man unfairly taking food from another man who deserves it: "It is as if two starving men had divided their only loaf; the one had hastily swallowed his half, and then grabbed the other half just as he was putting it to his mouth!"

Lincoln dismissed as an "inferior matter," a "palliation," and a "lullaby" the contention of Douglas and many others that slavery would never spread into Kansas and Nebraska even if popular sovereignty were applied there. He pointed out that over 860,000 slaves – fully 25% of the nation's unfree population – lived north of the Missouri Compromise line (in Delaware, Maryland, Missouri, Virginia, Kentucky, and the District of Columbia). Moreover, in western Missouri, abutting Kansas, slavery flourished. The best way to keep Kansas free was to prevent the peculiar institution from entering there in the first place. By allowing slaves to be brought

into that territory as soon as it was thrown open to settlement, Douglas guaranteed that slavery would fasten itself on Kansas in perpetuity: “To get slaves into the country simultaneously with the whites, in the incipient states of settlement, is the precise stake played for, and won in this Nebraska measure,” Lincoln maintained. Slavery never sank deep roots in Illinois, he said, because the Northwest Ordinance of 1787 had specifically banned the peculiar institution there. But neighboring Missouri, with no such ban, became a Slave State.

If Kansas and Nebraska were thrown open to slavery, it would encourage the outlawed African slave trade by increasing the demand for slaves. Thus Douglas’s bill “does, in fact, make slaves of freemen by causing them to be brought from Africa, and sold into bondage.”

Lincoln’s fundamental point, which distinguished his position from Douglas’s, was that blacks were fully human and thus entitled to certain basic rights. The popular sovereignty doctrine – resting on the assumption that if settlers in Kansas and Nebraska were allowed to take their hogs with them, they should also be allowed to take their slaves – is, Lincoln contended, “perfectly logical” only “if there is no difference between hogs and negroes.” Lincoln flatly refused “to deny the humanity of the negro” and argued that Southerners showed by their actions, if not their words, that they agreed with him. In both the North and the South there lived few “natural tyrants,” he said; most people in both sections “have human sympathies” which made them hostile to slavery. Southerners revealed their own antislavery feelings in many ways. In 1820, Southern senators and Representatives joined with Northerners to regard African slave traders as pirates subject to the death penalty. Addressing the citizens of the South, Lincoln asked: “Why did you do this? If you did not feel that it was wrong, why did you join in [providing] that men should be hung for it? The practice was no more than bringing wild negroes from Africa, to sell to such as would buy them. But you never thought of hanging men for

catching and selling wild horses, wild buffaloes or wild bears.” Why did respectable Southerners “utterly despise” slave dealers, refusing to socialize with them, befriend them, or even touch them, Lincoln asked. “You do not so treat the man who deals in corn, cattle or tobacco.” The existence in the U.S. of more than 430,000 free blacks, worth more than \$200,000,000 if enslaved, further showed that Southerners realized that slaves were human beings, not mere chattel. “How comes this vast amount of property to be running at large?” The freedmen were slaves liberated by their masters or descendents of slaves who had been so liberated. What induced their owners to free them? “In all these cases,” Lincoln concluded, “it is your sense of justice, and human sympathy, continually telling you, that the poor negro has some natural right to himself – that those who deny it, and make mere merchandise of him, deserve kickings, contempt and death.” Rhetorically he queried Southerners: “why will you ask us to deny the humanity of the slave? And estimate him only as the equal of the hog? Why ask us to do what you will not do yourselves?”

They were good questions.

If blacks were human and not chattel, then Douglas’s argument that the Missouri Compromise violated “the sacred right of self government” was false. The Little Giant’s basic premise Lincoln agreed with: “The doctrine of self government is right – absolutely and eternally right,” but whether that doctrine was relevant in the current debate over Kansas and Nebraska depended “upon whether a negro is not or is a man. If he is not a man, why in that case, he who is a man may, as a matter of self-government, do just as he pleases with him. But if the negro is a man, is it not to that extent, a total destruction of self-government, to say that he too shall not govern himself?” Like an Old Testament prophet, Lincoln declared: “When the white man governs himself, that is self-government; but when he governs himself, and also governs another

man, that is more than self-government – that is despotism. If the negro is a man, why then my ancient faith teaches me that ‘all men are created equal;’ and that there can be no moral right in connection with one man’s making a slave of another.” To Douglas’s contemptuous assertion that antislavery forces argued that the “white people of Nebraska are good enough to govern themselves, but they are not good enough to govern a few miserable negroes,”²⁰² Lincoln replied: “no man is good enough to govern another man, without that other’s consent. I say this is the leading principle – the sheet anchor of American republicanism.” After quoting the Declaration of Independence, Lincoln called the relationship between master and slave a “total violation” of its central principle: “The master not only governs the slave without his consent; but he governs him by a set of rules altogether different from those which he prescribes for himself. Allow ALL the governed an equal voice in the government, and that, and that only is self-government.”

Lincoln explained that he was not advocating equal political rights for blacks, but was rather “combating what is set up as [a] MORAL argument” for permitting slaves “to be taken where they have never yet been – arguing against the EXTENSION of a bad thing, which where it already exists, we must of necessity, manage as best we can.”

Douglas was wrong, said Lincoln, in asserting that the extension of slavery into Kansas and Nebraska concerned only settlers in those territories: “The whole nation is interested that the best use shall be made of these territories. We want them for the homes of free white people. This they cannot be, to any considerable extent, if slavery shall be planted within them.” Here Lincoln was not making the argument that some Free Soilers did: that they wanted slavery kept out of the territories because they disliked blacks and had no desire to live near them. Instead,

²⁰² Lincoln took notes on Douglas’s speech and may have here rendered his words more accurately than the Peoria Daily Union, which reported that the Little Giant said: “They [settlers in Kansas] were permitted to legislate upon every subject affecting the white man, but were to be told that they had not sufficient intelligence to legislate for the black man.” Peoria Daily Union, 24 October 1854, in Bryner, Lincoln in Peoria, 155-56.

Lincoln emphasized something that his own family had learned: “Slave States are places for poor white people to remove FROM; not to remove TO. New free States are the places for poor people to go to and better their condition.” Lincoln objected not to the presence of blacks but to the presence of slave owners and their hierarchical social system.

In asserting that Republicans wanted the territories to become “homes of free white people,” Lincoln was adopting what the Chicago Tribune called “a narrow method” for appealing to white voters. Deemphasizing moral arguments was necessary because, said the Tribune, “it is far easier to convince the multitude that Slavery is a baleful evil to them than to possess them with the idea that it is a cruel wrong to the enslaved. . . . [S]o inveterate are the prejudices of color; so deep rooted . . . is the conviction that the African is a being of an inferior order; so intolerant is the Caucasian of African assertion of equality; so low, under the depressing influence of ‘the institution,’ has the national morality descended, that this method, narrow and incomplete as it is, holds out the only promise of success.”²⁰³

Northern whites also had a stake in the outcome of the debate over slavery expansion, Lincoln averred, because of “constitutional relations between the slave and free states, which are degrading to the latter.” Free State residents did not wish to help catch runaway slaves, as the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850 mandated. It was, Lincoln said, “a sort of dirty, disagreeable job, which I believe, as a general rule the slave-holders will not perform for one another.” Northern whites also did not want more Slave States because the Constitution’s three-fifths clause permitted them to have representation of their unfree population in the U.S. House and in the Electoral College. Offering an argument which had been made repeatedly since 1789, Lincoln protested that it was grossly unfair for South Carolina, where 274,567 whites lived, to have the

²⁰³ “The White Man’s Party,” Chicago Tribune, 30 May 1857.

same number of Representatives in Congress as Maine, with a white population of over 580,000.²⁰⁴ The three-fifths rule, Lincoln calculated, gave the Slave States twenty more Representatives in the House and votes in the Electoral College than they would have had in the absence of such a rule. Without those extra congressmen, the Kansas-Nebraska Act, which passed the House by a seven-vote margin, might never have become law.

Lincoln pledged to obey the Constitution's fugitive slave clause and three-fifths rule "fairly, fully, and firmly" but balked at allowing the settlers of Kansas and Nebraska – "a mere hand-full of men, bent only on temporary self-interest" – to decide whether the nation should add more Slave States: "when I am told I must leave it altogether to OTHER PEOPLE to say whether new partners are to be bred up and brought into the firm, on the same degrading terms against me, I respectfully demur." Lincoln insisted "that whether I shall be a whole man, or only, the half of one, in comparison with others, is a question with which I am somewhat concerned; and one which no other man can have a sacred right of deciding for me." Scornfully he dismissed "this mighty argument, of self government. Go, sacred thing! Go in peace."

To those who asserted that opposition to the Kansas-Nebraska Act posed a threat to the Union, Lincoln forcefully replied that it was Douglas and his supporters who imperiled national unity by needlessly reviving the slavery controversy, which had been defused by the Compromise of 1850. "It could not but be expected by its author, that it would be looked upon as a measure for the extension of slavery, aggravated by a gross breach of faith." Speaking again with the moral passion of a prophet like Amos or Hosea, Lincoln declared that "Slavery is founded in the selfishness of man's nature – Opposition to it, in his love of justice. These principles are in eternal antagonism; and when brought into collision so fiercely, as slavery

²⁰⁴ Richards, Slave Power, 32-82.

extension brings them, shocks, and throes, and convulsions must ceaselessly follow.” Supporters of slavery might repeal the Missouri Compromise, the Declaration of Independence, and “all past history,” but “you still can not repeal human nature.” Paraphrasing Jesus, he said: “It still will be the abundance of man’s heart, that slavery extension is wrong; and out of the abundance of his heart, his mouth will continue to speak.” Lincoln agreed that the Union was indeed worth preserving: “Much as I hate slavery, I would consent to the extension of it rather than see the Union dissolved, just as I would consent to any GREAT evil, to avoid a GREATER one.” (By 1861, he had changed his mind on this question.) But the Kansas-Nebraska Act did not threaten the Union, he insisted; quoting Hamlet, he added that “It hath no relish of salvation in it.”

Lincoln pointed out a basic flaw in the popular sovereignty argument: its failure to specify at what point in the development of a territory its settlers could forbid slavery. “Is it to be decided by the first dozen settlers who arrive there? Or is it to await the arrival of a hundred?” And just who would be empowered to take action against the peculiar institution; was it the territorial legislature, or the people in a referendum?

To those Whigs who opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act but who hesitated to demand the restoration of the Missouri Compromise lest they be seen as allies of the abolitionists, Lincoln counseled: “Stand with anybody that stands RIGHT. Stand with him while he is right and PART with him when he goes wrong. Stand WITH the abolitionist in restoring the Missouri Compromise; and stand AGAINST him when he attempts to repeal the fugitive slave law. In the latter case you stand with the southern disunionist. What of that? You are still right. In both cases you oppose the dangerous extremes.” That, he said, “is good old whig ground. To desert such ground, because of any company, is to be less than a whig – less than a man – less than an American.”

Scouting Douglas's attempt to enlist the Founding Fathers as supporters of popular sovereignty, Lincoln quite rightly pointed out that the "argument of 'Necessity' was the only argument they ever admitted in favor of slavery; and so far, and so far only as it carried them did they ever go. They found the institution existing among us, which they could not help; and they cast blame upon the British King for having permitted its introduction." In 1787, they forbade slavery from expanding from the original states into the Old Northwest. In writing the Constitution, "they forbore to so much as mention the word 'slave' or 'slavery' in the whole instrument." So "the thing is hid away, in the constitution, just as an afflicted man hides away a wen or a cancer, which he dares not cut out at once, lest he bleed to death; with the promise, nevertheless, that the cutting may begin at the end of a given time." The early Congresses followed suit, prohibiting the exportation of slaves in 1794; prohibiting the importation of slaves into the Mississippi Territory in 1798; forbidding U.S. citizens from participation in the slave trade between foreign countries in 1800; restraining the internal slave trade in 1803; outlawing the importation of slaves in 1807; and declaring the African slave trade to be piracy in 1820. So the Founders showed "hostility to the principle" of slavery "and toleration, ONLY BY NECESSITY."

But, Lincoln argued, Douglas was forsaking the Founding Fathers by placing slavery "on the high road to extension and perpetuity; and, with a pat on its back, says to it, 'Go, and God speed you.'" This betrayal of the Framers' vision Lincoln deplored: "Nearly eighty years ago we began by declaring that all men are created equal; but now from that beginning we have run down to the other declaration, that for SOME men to enslave OTHERS is a 'sacred right of self-government.' These principles can not stand together. They are as opposite as God and mammon." He was especially incensed at Indiana Senator John Pettit who, in supporting the

Kansas-Nebraska bill, referred to the Declaration of Independence as “a self-evident lie.” None of his colleagues in the Douglas camp rebuked Pettit for that statement. Passionately Lincoln remarked that if such words had been spoken “to the men who captured Andre, the man who said it, would probably have been hung sooner than Andre was. If it had been said in old Independence Hall, seventy-eight years ago, the very door-keeper would have throttled the man, and thrust him into the street.” (“The applause that followed was continued for some minutes.”)²⁰⁵ The new cynicism about the Declaration was “a sad evidence that, feeling prosperity we forget about right – that liberty as a principle we have ceased to revere.”

In his heartfelt peroration, Lincoln urged North and South alike to reconsider their views: “In our greedy chase to make profit of the negro, let us beware, lest we ‘cancel and tear to pieces’ even the white man’s charter of freedom. Our republican robe is soiled, and trailed in the dust. Let us repurify it. Let us turn and wash it white, in the spirit, if not the blood, of the Revolution. Let us turn slavery from its claim of ‘moral right,’ back upon its existing legal rights, and its arguments of ‘necessity.’ Let us return it to the position our fathers gave it; and there let it rest in peace. Let us re-adopt the Declaration of Independence, and with it, the practices, and policy, which harmonize with it. Let north and south – let all Americans – let all lovers of liberty everywhere – join in the great and good work. If we do this, we shall not only have saved it, that the succeeding millions of free happy people, the world over, shall rise up and call us blessed, to the latest generations.”²⁰⁶

This statesmanlike speech, delivered with the utmost conviction, “attracted a more marked attention,” Lincoln noted, than had his earlier addresses and was published in the Illinois

²⁰⁵ Springfield correspondence by W., 4 October, Chicago Democrat, 9 October 1854.

²⁰⁶ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:247-76.

State Journal.²⁰⁷ Significantly, Lincoln devoted little attention to nativism, the temperance crusade, or any issue other than slavery. The Springfield Register thought it noteworthy that “Lincoln spoke of Judge Douglas in a less denunciatory manner than is the custom on such occasions,”²⁰⁸ though the Little Giant “laughingly acknowledged” that his opponent had handled him “without mercy or gloves.”²⁰⁹ Lincoln had come a long way since the 1830s and 1840s, when he ridiculed James Adams, Dick Quinton, George Forquer, James Shields, Peter Cartwright, Lewis Cass, James K. Polk, Dick Taylor, Jesse B. Thomas, and other Democrats.

The form as well as the substance of Lincoln’s oratory changed. An observer of his speeches in 1854 and 1856 recalled that he “was a very presentable public speaker.” All auditors clearly discerned “his natural manly manner” and felt “the charm of a kindly and earnest heart.” In earlier years, he had been awkward on the stump, as if he “did not know what to do with his body or its members. He was all over country,” seeming “to want to steady himself, to hang on to something, as most young and untrained tyros do when trying to speak. He would grip the collar of his coat, place his hands firmly on his haunches, or clasp them in front or behind his body, all seemingly rustic actions having no apparent connection with the subject he was speaking about.” But by 1854, “he had learned to stand up, high and firm, going with his thought, and his arms became inflections of thought and words. When all worked well together, as they often did, then he was deeply impressive.” No longer was he “grasping his coat collar, standing uneasily on his legs, and actually wringing his hands until the circulation seemed to cease.” This admirer “was charmed with the easy naturalness of his manner” and “could plainly

²⁰⁷ Autobiography written for John Locke Scripps, [ca. June 1860], Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:67.

²⁰⁸ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 28 September 1854. This remark was a propos of Lincoln’s speech in Bloomington on September 26, substantially the same that he delivered later in Springfield and Peoria.

²⁰⁹ “Personal Reminiscences of the Late Abraham Lincoln by a contributor to the ‘Bulletin,’” San Francisco Daily Evening Bulletin, 22 April 1865. The author said that he knew Lincoln “in his intercourse with men in several counties of the State.”

see the growth of a great nature. No other of all the able public speakers in Illinois was anything like him. He often had the air of being himself and feeling so.”²¹⁰ He would sometimes emphasize a climax by bending toward the audience and extending his arms “as if to bring his hearers nearer to the point he was making, nearer to himself, to better make his meaning understood.”²¹¹

Though his platform presence improved dramatically, he evidently retained some of his earlier gestures. A clergyman thought he “had an awkward swinging motion with his arm extended straight in front, rather sawing up and down.”²¹² At Springfield, Horace White recalled, Lincoln’s gestures, “made with his body and head rather than with his arms,” were “the natural expression of the man, and so perfectly adapted to what he was saying that anything different from it would have been quite inconceivable.” He presented “not a graceful figure and yet not an ungraceful one”: a “tall, angular form with the long, angular arms, at times bent nearly double with excitement, like a large flail animating two smaller ones.” Because it was a warm day, he removed his coat, and his “mobile face” became “wet with perspiration which he discharged in drops as he threw his head this way and that like a projectile.” Although “awkward,” Lincoln “was not in the least embarrassed.”

Lincoln started off in a “slow and hesitating manner, but without any mistakes of language, dates, or facts.” To White it became immediately clear that “he had mastered his subject, that he knew what he was going to say, and that he knew he was right.” Lincoln’s “thin, high-pitched falsetto voice of much carrying power . . . could be heard a long distance in spite of

²¹⁰ Fragment of an unidentified reminiscence in the Truman Bartlett Papers, Boston University.

²¹¹ Unidentified informant quoted in Truman H. Bartlett, “The Cooper Institute Portrait of Abraham Lincoln,” p. 39, typescript, Bartlett Papers, Boston University.

²¹² Edwin Hall, paraphrased by his son, W. W. Hall, in Hall to Truman H. Bartlett, Providence, R.I., 12 February 1919, Bartlett Papers, Boston University.

the bustle and tumult of a crowd.” Betraying his backwoods upbringing, he spoke with “the accent and pronunciation peculiar to his native State, Kentucky.” In time, as “he warmed up with his subject, his angularity disappeared,” and he took on an air “of unconscious majesty.” While progressing through his three-hour oration, “his words began to come faster and his face to light up with the rays of genius and his body to move in unison with his thoughts.” Now and then “his manner was very impassioned, and he seemed transfigured with his subject.” Perspiration “would stream from his face, and each particular hair would stand on end.” At that point “the inspiration that possessed him took possession of his hearers also. His speaking went to the heart because it came from the heart.” The crowd “felt that he believed every word he said, and that, like Martin Luther, he would go to the stake rather than abate one jot or tittle of it.” At “such transfigured moments as these,” when his words resembled “electrical discharges of high tension,” Lincoln seemed to White like an “ancient Hebrew prophet.”²¹³ Varying the image, White in a dispatch to the Chicago Journal described Lincoln as “a mammoth” who “had this day delivered a speech, the greatest ever listened to in the state of Illinois, unless himself has made a greater.” Douglas “never in his life received so terrible a back fall. For vigor of thought, strength of expression, comprehensiveness of scope, keenness of argument – extent of research, and candor of presentation, the speech of Mr. Lincoln has rarely been equaled in the annals of American eloquence.”²¹⁴ Later, White ranked Lincoln’s address as “one of the world’s masterpieces of argumentative power and moral grandeur, which left Douglas’s edifice of ‘Popular Sovereignty’ a heap of ruins.”²¹⁵

²¹³ Horace White, “Abraham Lincoln in 1854,” Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society, 1908 (Springfield: Illinois State Journal, 1909), 10; *White in William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Abraham Lincoln: The True Story of a Great Life (2nd ed.; New York, D. Appleton, 1892), 2:90-91.

²¹⁴ Springfield correspondence by W., 4 October 1854, Chicago Journal, 9 October 1854.

²¹⁵ White, Life of Lyman Trumbull, 39.

Herndon called Lincoln's speech "the profoundest, in our opinion, that he has made in his whole life" and told readers of the Illinois Journal that Lincoln "quivered with emotion" as he "attacked the Nebraska bill with unusual warmth and energy." At the close of his analysis of that statute, "a kind of scorn and mockery was visible . . . upon the lips of the most eloquent speaker." He "felt upon his soul the truths burn which he uttered," and the audience, "as still as death," sensed "that he was true to his own soul" and "approved the glorious triumph of truth by loud and continued huzzahs. Women waved their white handkerchiefs in token of woman's silent, but heartfelt assent." At certain passages his feelings "swelled within and came near stifling utterance," most notably "when he said that the Declaration of Independence taught us that 'all men are born free and equal' – that by the laws of nature and nature's God, 'all were free' – that the Nebraska law chained men, free and equal, and 'that there was as much difference between the glorious truths of the immortal Declaration of Independence and the Nebraska bill, as there was between God and Mammon.' These are his own words. They were spoken with emphasis, feeling, and true eloquence, – eloquent, because true, and because he felt, and felt deeply, what he said."²¹⁶

Democrats attacked the speech for alleging that "the white man had no right to pass laws for the government of the black man without the nigger's consent." The Springfield Register sneered at it as an act of *lèse-majesté*: "Endowed by heaven with a talent to hoodwink the blind, and with a facility of speech well calculated to deceive the ignorant, he vainly imagines himself a great man, and as such, endeavored to cope with such men."²¹⁷

Immediately after Lincoln had finished, Douglas "took the stand actually quivering," complained that "he had been grossly assailed though in a perfectly courteous manner," and

²¹⁶ Illinois Journal (Springfield), 10 October 1854; *Angle, ed., Herndon's Lincoln, 296-97.

²¹⁷ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 16, 9 October 1854.

argued that Lincoln and other critics aimed “to agitate until the people of the South would, from fear of their slaves, set them free.”²¹⁸

The Springfield address greatly enhanced Lincoln’s stature in Illinois. “Hitherto he had been appreciated chiefly in his own Congressional District,” as one Douglas adherent put it. But at the capital, “men of influence from every county of the State, substantial men and politicians, who had gathered together at the holding of the Fair, had heard him. On that day he opened the outer gate of the path that he followed to the Presidency.”²¹⁹

When Lincoln gave a preliminary version of this speech in Winchester, “he made a few gestures, more with his head than he did with his hands or arms.” In discussing the way in which the three-fifths provision of the constitution diminished the political rights of free state voters, he said: “Talk about equal rights, I would like some man to take a pointer dog, and nose around, and snuff about, and see if he can find my rights in such a condition.” He illustrated this image by imitating “with his head and face the acts of a dog doing that.” Richard Yates said of Lincoln’s effort in Winchester: “I have heard this winter all the big men in Congress talk on this question, but Lincoln’s is the strongest speech I ever heard on the subject.”²²⁰

*

After Lincoln finished his memorable address in Springfield, two dozen of the state’s most militant opponents of slavery met at the capitol, praised the speech, and formed what they

²¹⁸ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 6 October 1854; Springfield correspondence by W., 4 October, Chicago Democrat, 9 October 1854.

²¹⁹ “Personal Reminiscences of the Late Abraham Lincoln, by a contributor to the ‘Bulletin,’” San Francisco Bulletin, 22 April 1865.

²²⁰ Dr. James Miner, “Abraham Lincoln: Personal Reminiscences of the Martyr-Emancipator as He Appeared in the Memorable Campaign of 1854 and in His Subsequent Career,” undated typescript, reference files of the Abraham Lincoln Association, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. While in Winchester, Lincoln met with Nathan M. Knapp, who offered valuable suggestions about campaign strategy. John Moses’s reminiscences, Winchester Independent, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 27 October 1879.

styled the Republican party of Illinois.²²¹ Though Lincoln did not attend that conclave, he was elected to its twelve-member state central committee, an act that Democrats cited as proof positive of his radical abolitionism.²²²

On October 16, Lincoln delivered substantially the same speech in Peoria that he had given at Springfield, with an appended passage responding to Douglas’s criticism of his October 4 address.²²³ Lincoln began thus: “He thought he could appreciate an argument, and, at times, believed he could make one, but when one denied the settled and plainest facts of history, you could not argue with him; the only thing you could do would be to stop his mouth with a corn cob.”²²⁴ In fact, Douglas had made some egregious historical errors, asserting that Illinois had been admitted to the Union as a slave state and that the Constitution had mandated the end of the African slave trade. But Lincoln was more concerned with Douglas’s moral arguments than his factual errors. The Little Giant had maintained that the government of the U.S. was made by white men for white men. Lincoln thought this comment showed “that the Judge has no very vivid impression that the negro is a human; and consequently has no idea that there can be any moral question in legislating about him.” In Douglas’s opinion, Lincoln continued, “the question of whether a new country shall be slave or free, is a matter of as utter indifference, as it is whether his neighbor shall plant his farm with tobacco, or stock it with horned cattle.” Lincoln objected that “whether this view is right or wrong, it is very certain that the great mass of mankind take a totally different view.” By 1854, most people around the world had come to “consider slavery a great moral wrong; and their feelings against it, is not evanescent, but eternal.

²²¹ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 7 October 1854; “History of the Early Organization of the Republican Party,” Chicago Democrat, 2 November 1860.

²²² Illinois State Register (Springfield), 14 October 1854.

²²³ The Peoria Daily Union of 20 October ran an account of Douglas’s speech. It is given in Bryner, Lincoln in Peoria, 143-58.

²²⁴ Robert Boal’s undated reminiscence, Bryner, Lincoln in Peoria, 33-34.

It lies at the very foundation of their sense of justice; and it cannot be trifled with. It is a great and durable element of popular action, and, I think, no statesman can safely disregard it.” He also likened Douglas’s argument to the ancient theory of the divine right of kings: “By the one, the monarch was responsible for what he did with ‘his white subjects’; and by the other, the white man was responsible only to God for what he did with his ‘black slaves.’”²²⁵

An angry Douglas replied only briefly, for he had become hoarse after speaking for three hours that afternoon. Other Democrats attacked Lincoln, including a newspaper in Peoria which charged that he had in effect sanctioned miscegenation: he “laid down as a principle more consistent with our institutions and government, that no people were good enough to legislate for another people without that other’s consent; or in other words: – the people of Nebraska are not competent to legislate for the negro without the negro’s consent. Mr. Lincoln labored to convince his hearers of the truth of this doctrine, having an eye undoubtedly to Mr. [James] Knox’s position on the negro question in the constitutional convention. . . . The convention which formed our present constitution thought that the people of Illinois should say whether whites and blacks should intermarry, without consulting the feelings of the negroes, and adopted a provision forbidding such intermarriage. When this question of legal amalgamation of the white and negro races was up, Mr. Knox advocated it by voting against the clause prohibiting it, thus carrying out Mr. Lincoln’s principle, that the whites are not good enough to legislate for the negro without the consent of the negro. If Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Knox are correct on this point, our laws ‘with adequate penalties, preventing the intermarriage of whites with blacks’ and that ‘no colored person shall ever, under any pretext, be allowed to hold any office of honor or profit in this state,’ ARE ALL WRONG, because each of these provisions have been adopted without the

²²⁵ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:276-83.

consent of the negro.”²²⁶ The Peoria Republican took a more favorable view of “Lincoln’s truly able and masterly speech.” The editors said they had “never heard the subjects treated of so eloquently handled, nor have we often seen a speaker acquit himself with greater apparent ease and self-possession.”²²⁷

After replying to Douglas at Springfield and Peoria, Lincoln planned to continue the pattern, starting at Lacon on October 17. (His Springfield friends had signed a petition urging him to dog the senator’s heels till he cried “Enough!”)²²⁸ The Little Giant, however, had become hoarse and canceled his Lacon appointment. Lincoln, not wishing to take advantage of his rival’s indisposition, magnanimously called off his appearance.²²⁹ Douglas recovered sufficiently to speak in Princeton on the eighteenth, but the following day quit the campaign trail to recruit his health. Meanwhile, Lincoln fulfilled engagements in Urbana, Chicago, and Quincy.²³⁰

As he was leaving Urbana “in a dilapidated old omnibus,” a new friend, the young attorney Henry C. Whitney, criticized him for making “the most execrable music” on a harmonica. He replied: “This is my band; Douglas had a brass band with him in Peoria, but this will do me.” Whitney recalled that Lincoln’s “attire and physical habits were on a plane with those of an ordinary farmer.” His hat lacked any nap, his coat seemed to be ten years old, his boots were unshined, his valise “was well worn and dilapidated,” and his umbrella “was

²²⁶ Peoria Press, 21 October 1854.

²²⁷ Peoria Republican, 20 October 1854.

²²⁸ B. F. Irwin to Herndon, Pleasant Plains, 8 February 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 198.

²²⁹ Robert Boal to Herndon, Peoria, 5 March 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 224.

²³⁰ Some of Lincoln’s friends maintained that at Peoria Douglas had offered to quit campaigning if Lincoln would follow suit. See, for example, Herndon’s 1866 broadside, “The Peoria Debates and Lincoln’s Power,” in Bryner, Lincoln in Peoria, 63-72. Contemporary newspaper accounts indicate that this “Peoria truce” story is false. Paul M. Angle, “The Peoria Truce,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 21 (1929): 500-5; Ernest E. East, “The ‘Peoria Truce’: Did Douglas Ask for Quarter?” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 29 (1936): 70-75. *cite lew’s book

substantial, but of a faded green, well worn, and the name ‘A. Lincoln’ cut out of white muslin, and sewed in the inside.”²³¹

*

In November, Democrats lost badly throughout the Free States, including Illinois.²³² “Never before have the democracy of Illinois been so completely vanquished,” observed the Joliet Signal.²³³ The results in the Prairie State, where opponents of the Kansas-Nebraska Act dominated both the legislature and the congressional delegation, gratified antislavery journals like the New York Tribune, which deemed the election a referendum on Douglas: “No Senator of the United States ever before received such a withering repudiation.”²³⁴ Douglas’s colleague in the senate, James Shields, ascribed the defeat in Illinois to the Little Giant’s dictatorial insistence that all Democratic candidates support the unpopular Kansas-Nebraska Act. Many voters, Shields reported, thought that Douglas had become the tool of Missouri Senator David Rice Atchison, who wanted Kansas – located on Missouri’s western border – to become a slave state.²³⁵ Democrat John M. Palmer deeply resented the high-handed tactics of the Little Giant, whom he called “this miniature negro driver, this small sample of a Carolina overseer who speaks to us as if we were slaves.”²³⁶

Despite the Democrats’ poor showing, Richard Yates lost his bid for reelection, largely because he was labeled a Know-Nothing, causing the foreign-born to support his opponent,

²³¹ Whitney, Life on the Circuit with Lincoln, ed. Angle, 54, 55.

²³² Nevins, Ordeal of the Union, 2:341-46.

²³³ Joliet Signal, 14 February 1854, in Cole, Era of the Civil War, 133.

²³⁴ New York Tribune, 10 November 1854.

²³⁵ James A. Shields to Charles H. Lanphier, Belleville, 25 October 1854, Lanphier Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

²³⁶ Palmer to Lyman Trumbull, Carlinville, 11 January 1856, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

Thomas L. Harris.²³⁷ Those voters had already been alienated by the temperance crusade conducted in part by Whigs.²³⁸ Ironically, Yates was also injured by rumors that he was a drunkard. In September, Lincoln reported that the congressman's "enemies are getting up a charge against him, that while he passes for a temperate man, he is in the habit of drinking secretly," a charge which Lincoln dismissed even though, as it turned out, Yates did in fact have a drinking problem.²³⁹ (Yates was drunk at the 1860 convention which nominated him for governor.)²⁴⁰ In addition, he had estranged supporters by failing to deliver on all his patronage promises.²⁴¹ On top of that, the state legislature had redrawn his district, lopping off northern counties where Whigs predominated and adding southern counties with more Democratic voters.²⁴² Moreover, Yates's opponents had attacked him as a friend of blacks. Alluding to his votes in the General Assembly, the Springfield Register said "those who are in favor of repealing all laws making distinctions between whites and blacks, and are willing to let the negroes vote, sit on juries and give evidence in court against the white man, and that whites and blacks marry

²³⁷ Cole, Era of the Civil War, 137; Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 14 November 1854. In Morgan County, Yates's vote declined because there were two Whig candidates vying for state legislature, causing some bitterness; similarly, there was more than one Whig candidate for sheriff, causing trouble for Yates. According to the Illinois State Journal, "deep and bitter personal animosities" wound up "diverting exertions in behalf of Mr. Yates, to other quarters," and "losing him directly a large number of votes." Lincoln ascribed Yates's loss to the defection of about 200 English-born Whigs in Morgan and Scott counties. Lincoln to Orville H. Browning, Springfield, 12 November 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:286-87.

²³⁸ Jack Nortrup, "A Western Whig in Washington," Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 64 (1971): 441.

²³⁹ Lincoln to Richard Oglesby, Springfield, 8 September 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, First Supplement, 24.

²⁴⁰ Horace White to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 14 May 1860, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁴¹ Nortrup, "A Western Whig in Washington," 441. Particularly harmful was a dispute over an appointment to the state insane asylum. Nortrup, "Lincoln and Yates," 243.

²⁴² Springfield correspondence, 7 October, Chicago Journal, 12 October 1854. In 1852, Yates's district had been redrawn by the Democrat-dominated legislature to assure his defeat in 1854. Yates, Yates, 103; Nortrup, "Yates," 105. Northern counties were lopped off (Putnam, Marshall, Woodford, Tazewell, Mason, Logan) and southern counties added (Macoupin, Greene, Montgomery, Christian, Shelby, Jersey). Laws of the State of Illinois Passed by the Seventeenth General Assembly, at its Second Session (Springfield: Lanphier & Walker, 1852), 13.

indiscriminately, just let them vote for Mr. Yates.”²⁴³ Adding to his problems, the state Democratic party concentrated its efforts on defeating Yates. Douglas had issued orders to “beat the d[amne]d little pup.” In October, it was reported that “the Douglasites would willingly lose every other of the nine Districts to see Thomas L. Harris elected.”²⁴⁴

*

If Yates bemoaned his failure to win reelection, Lincoln regretted his own victory in the legislative contest, for it rendered him ineligible for the U.S. Senate seat which he hoped to gain when the newly elected General Assembly, with its slim majority of Anti-Nebraska members, convened in January.²⁴⁵ It is uncertain just when the prospect of the senatorship first tickled Lincoln’s ambition, but as election day approached, it seemed clear that he might attain such a high office. On September 27, he wrote to George Gage, a candidate for the General Assembly, about the U.S. senatorship. Gage replied: “I have strong hopes we shall elect a Senator the ensueing session & that you will succeed. Rest assured you have my best wishes I shall try and render you all the assistance I can.”²⁴⁶ Around this time, Lincoln read aloud to Henry C. Whitney passages from Byron’s “Childe Harold,” reciting the following canto “earnestly, if not, indeed, reverently”:

He who ascends to mountain tops, shall find

Those loftiest peaks most wrapt in clouds and snow;

²⁴³ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 6 October 1854. The Springfield Journal insisted that the Register had misinterpreted the legislative record. Illinois Journal (Springfield), 12 October 1854.

²⁴⁴ Springfield correspondence, 7 October, Chicago Journal, 12 October 1854.

²⁴⁵ Herndon to Weik, 28 October 1885, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. The constitution of 1848 made state legislators ineligible for election to the senate. Charles H. Coleman, “Was Lincoln Eligible for Election to the United States Senate in 1855?” Lincoln Herald 60 (1958): 91-93.

²⁴⁶ George Gage to Lincoln, McHenry, 4 October 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Lincoln’s letter to Gage is not extant.

He who surpasses or subdues mankind
Must look down on the hate of those below;
Though high above the sun of glory glow,
And far beneath the Earth and Ocean spread,
Round him are icy rocks, and loudly blow
Contending tempests on his naked head,
And thus reward the toils which to those summits led.

Whitney believed that Lincoln had a premonition that he would reach “the mountain tops of human achievement.”²⁴⁷ In political terms, that mountain top was a U.S. senate seat. In 1860, Lincoln said: “I would rather have a full term in the Senate – a place in which I would feel more consciously able to discharge the duties required and where there was more chance to make reputation and less danger of losing it – than four years of the presidency.”²⁴⁸ The previous year, he informed Norman B. Judd: “I would rather have a full term in the Senate than in the Presidency.”²⁴⁹

Invitations to speak outside his congressional district may have stoked Lincoln’s senatorial ambition. Horace White, in urging Lincoln to campaign in Chicago, told him: “the Whigs are bound to elect a U.S. Senator in place of [James] Shields. Chicago has five votes in the Legislature and influences a great many more in Northern Illinois. Part of our Representatives in the next Assembly will be Whigs, part Free-Soilers & part Anti-Nebraska

²⁴⁷ Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 149, and “Abraham Lincoln: A Study from Life,” Arena 19 (April 1898): 479-80.

²⁴⁸ Lincoln’s remarks to General Benjamin Welch, memorandum by John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 25 October 1860, Michael Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House: Letters, Memoranda, and Other Writings of John G. Nicolay, 1860-1865 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 7.

²⁴⁹ Lincoln to Judd, Springfield, 9 December 1859, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:505.

Democrats. These Democrats might bolt at the nomination of a Whig for the Senate. . . . The idea is to have you go to Chicago and make a speech. You will have a crowd of from Eight to ten or fifteen thousand and the result will be that the people will demand of their representatives to elect a Whig Senator. What might be doubtful otherwise will thus be rendered certain.”²⁵⁰ At the same time, Richard L. Wilson, editor of the Chicago Journal, told Lincoln that “the defeat of Shields is certain.”²⁵¹ Neither Wilson nor White specifically alluded to Lincoln’s own candidacy, but William H. Randolph of Macomb did. In his appeal for Lincoln to stump in western Illinois, Randolph said: “Your name is also spoke[n] of as a candidate for U S Senator[.] Can we not reasonably hope to elect a thorough anti Nebraska Legislature[?] If so we hope for your election to that place[.]”²⁵² Abraham Jonas of Quincy, while imploring Lincoln to stump in his locale, hinted that he might win support for a senate bid: “I trust you may be able to pay us the visit and thereby create a debt of gratitude on the part of the Whigs here, which they may at some time, have it in their power, to repay with pleasure and with interest.”²⁵³

Lincoln, Herndon recalled, was “ambitious to reach the United States Senate, and, warmly encouraged in his aspirations by his wife,” campaigned for the post with “his characteristic activity and vigilance. During the anxious moments that intervened between the general election [in November] and the assembling of the Legislature [in January] he slept, like Napoleon, with one eye open.”²⁵⁴

Three days after the November election, Lincoln began writing a torrent of letters asking support for his senate bid. On November 10, he appealed to Charles Hoyt of Aurora: “You used

²⁵⁰ Horace White to Lincoln, Springfield, 25 October 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵¹ Richard L. Wilson to Lincoln, Chicago, 20 October 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵² Randolph to Lincoln, Macomb, 29 September 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵³ Jonas to Lincoln, Quincy, 16 September 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁵⁴ Angle, ed. Herndon’s Lincoln, 301–2.*

to express a good deal of partiality for me; and if you are still so, now is the time. Some friends here are really for me, for the U.S. Senate; and I should be very grateful if you could make a mark for me among your members.”²⁵⁵ That same day, he told Jonathan Y. Scammon of Chicago that “Some partial friends here are for me for the U.S. Senate; and it would be very foolish, and very false, for me to deny that I would be pleased with an election to that Honorable body. If you know nothing, and feel nothing to the contrary, please make a mark for me with the members.”²⁵⁶ The following day he asked Jacob Harding of Paris to visit his legislator and “make a mark with him for me,” for “I really have some chance.”²⁵⁷ Later that month, he appealed to Thomas J. Henderson of Toulon: “It has come round that a whig may, by possibility, be elected to the U.S. Senate; and I want the chance of being the man. You are a member of the Legislature, and have a vote to give. Think it over, and see whether you can do better than to go for me.”²⁵⁸ The following month, he wrote Joseph Gillespie: “I have really got it into my head to try to be United States Senator; and if I could have your support my chances would be reasonably good.”²⁵⁹

In late November, belatedly realizing that his status as a member-elect of the General Assembly might render him ineligible for the senate, Lincoln formally declined election as a state Representative.²⁶⁰ Though this step helped pave the way for his elevation to the senate, it

²⁵⁵ Lincoln to Hoyt, Clinton, 10 November 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:286.

²⁵⁶ Lincoln to Scammon, Clinton, 10 November 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, First Supplement, 25.

²⁵⁷ Lincoln to Harding, Clinton, 11 November 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:286.

²⁵⁸ Lincoln to Henderson, Springfield, 27 November 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:288.

²⁵⁹ Lincoln to Joseph Gillespie, Springfield, 1 December 1854, in Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:290. See also Lincoln to Hugh Leaser, Springfield, 29 November 1854; and to Herbert W. Fay, Springfield, 11 December 1854, ibid., 2:289, 292.

²⁶⁰ Lincoln to Noah Matheny, Springfield, 25 November 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:287-88.

was risky, for his candidacy enjoyed the barest majority in the legislature.²⁶¹ In the special election called to replace Lincoln in the General Assembly, the Democratic candidate, Jonathan McDaniel, surprisingly defeated Republican Norman Broadwell. McDaniel's supporters conducted a "still hunt," eschewing an overt campaign and waiting on election day to vote until the last minute. This tactic lulled the Whigs into complacency; though Yates had received 2,166 votes the previous month in Sangamon County, Broadwell won only 984.²⁶² Lincoln had paid little attention to the Broadwell-McDaniel contest, in part perhaps because Broadwell favored Yates for the senate.²⁶³ Shields gloated over the unexpected result, telling Charles Lanphier, editor of the Springfield Register: "Nobly done. You are a glorious set of Democrats. You turned the tables upon the Whigs. They made a maneuver to crush us, and were blown up by a mine while making the maneuver. This is the best Christmas joke of the season."²⁶⁴ Lincoln offered that same journalist a different gloss on the election: "It reminds me of Montecue Morris, a private in Baker's regiment in the Mexican War. Some of the soldiers had purchased a barrel of cider and were retailing it, at good profit, for twenty cents a glass. Montecue, whose tent was backed up to the cider barrel tent, tapped the other end of the barrel, through his tent, and began retailing the cider at ten cents a glass. He sold considerable before he was detected. That's the way we were served by the American vote and, while it's funny, it hurts."²⁶⁵

²⁶¹ Illinois State Register (Springfield), 2 December 1854.

²⁶² Lincoln to Elihu Washburne, Springfield, 9 February 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:304.

²⁶³ David Davis to Lincoln, Bloomington, 26 December 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁶⁴ Shields to Lanphier, Belleville, 30 December 1854, Lanphier Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

²⁶⁵ Lawrence B. Stringer, unpublished biography of Lincoln, 160, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. Stringer cited Samuel C. Parks, a member of the legislature in 1854-55, as his source. A similar version of this story can be found in History of Sangamon County, Illinois (Chicago: Inter-State, 1881), 258. In 1863, Lincoln told a version of this story to his cabinet. The Salmon P. Chase Papers, ed. John Niven et al. (5 vols.; Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993-1998), vol. 1, Journals, 1829-1872: 425 (diary entry for 23 January 1863).

It hurt more than Lincoln may at first have realized.²⁶⁶ Since the anti-Nebraska forces had only a slim majority in the legislature, they were understandably angry at Lincoln and other Sangamon County Whigs. David Davis told Lincoln that voters would say “Damn Springfield – the Whigs have behaved so shamefully that they ought to be punished & Lincoln should not be elected.”²⁶⁷ The Aurora Guardian objected to Lincoln’s resignation from legislature: “This fact, together with his over-weaning anxiety to obtain the place, will stand, and ought to do, against him seriously.”²⁶⁸ The Rock River Democrat concurred, saying that Lincoln “overreached himself that time, and may do so again before a Senator is chosen.”²⁶⁹

Broadwell’s defeat especially disenchanted the abolitionists. On December 29, an antislavery editor reported from Springfield that “I find here a strong feeling against Lincoln among those who should properly be his friends. . . . The election of that Nebraska man in the county of Sangamon to fill the vacancy occasioned by Abe’s resignation has done more than any thing else to damage him with the Abolitionists. That has put the seal to their discontent.”²⁷⁰ Lincoln had also alienated the antislavery radicals by failing to make common cause with them when they gathered in Springfield to form the Illinois Republican party. At that meeting, held on October 4 and 5, they elected Lincoln, without his knowledge, to their central committee.²⁷¹ (To delegates objecting that Lincoln was too conservative, Owen Lovejoy “responded with an

²⁶⁶ Springfield correspondence by “Almoner,” 1 January, Peoria Daily Press, 2 January 1855.

²⁶⁷ David Davis to Lincoln, Bloomington, 27 December 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁶⁸ Aurora Guardian, 11 January 1855.

²⁶⁹ Rock River Democrat, 9 January 1855.

²⁷⁰ Charles H. Ray to Elihu B. Washburne, Chicago, 29 December 1854, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁷¹ Howard, “Illinois Republican Party,” 147. Herndon’s claim that he was responsible for Lincoln’s absence from the meeting of the antislavery leaders who formed the Republican party seems implausible. Angle, ed., Herndon’s Lincoln, 266; David Donald, Lincoln’s Herndon (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1948), 77.

earnest endorsement of Lincoln's position on the slavery question.")²⁷² The following month he declined that honor, saying: "I have been perplexed some to understand why my name was placed on that committee. I was not consulted on the subject; nor was I apprized of the appointment, until I discovered it by accident two or three weeks afterwards. I supposed my opposition to the principle of slavery is as strong as that of any member of the Republican party; but I had also supposed that the extent to which I feel authorized to carry that opposition, practically, was not at all satisfactory to that party. The leading men who organized that party, were present, on the 4th. of Oct. at the discussion between Douglas and myself at Springfield, and had full opportunity to not misunderstand my position."²⁷³

On November 30, Zebina Eastman, an abolitionist from Chicago, declared in his newspaper The Free West: "We could not advise the republicans to support for this station [U.S. senator], Lincoln, or any of the moderate men of his stamp. He is only a Whig, and the people's movement is no whig triumph. All of whiggery that survived has been crushed out in the recent Congressional election." Eastman preferred Owen Lovejoy, Ichabod Coddling, Richard Yates, and William Bissell to Lincoln.²⁷⁴ When criticized by the Chicago Press and Tribune, Eastman replied: "Mr. Lincoln is a Know Nothing, and expects the full vote of the Republicans as well as the influence of the Know Nothings. Now Mr. Lincoln may know just as little as he pleases, he has got sense enough to make a good Senator, because he is not a Know Nothing by nature, as some of our Senators are, and he is reported to be a Good Fellow at heart. Some regrets have been expressed that we should have been so decided in our opposition to him. Our opposition is based upon short comings on the Republican basis. He is reported to be a Compromise Whig,

²⁷² Selby,* check out his two version of the convention.

²⁷³ Lincoln to Ichabod Coddling, Springfield, 27 November 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:288.

²⁷⁴ Chicago Free West, 30 November 1854.

and having a full attachment to that mummy of a party, which has done us no good in this State, but has brought upon us all the calamities and defeats of the Republican movement. He dares not oppose the fugitive slave law – and he would not pledge himself not to go against the admission of any more Slave States. If these cannot be gotten from him, of what service would he be in the Senate, when the Slavery question comes up? The Senator to be elected from this State, must be prepared to vote against the admission of Kansas or Nebraska as Slave States, or else we have only been fighting in the past election over the shell disgorged of the oyster.”²⁷⁵ A Democratic editor in Joliet sneered at Eastman’s attack on Lincoln: “The Free West, . . . having received for the cause of abolition and nigger equality all the aid and comfort from the whigs that it demanded, now turns about and attempts to kick them out of the abolition ranks.”²⁷⁶ Other antislavery militants favored Yates if an abolitionist like Coddington or Lovejoy could not win.²⁷⁷ A fiery, self-righteous Quaker abolitionist scold in Vermilion County, Abraham Smith, told Lincoln bluntly: “I don’t like Lincoln personally – have much reason to dislike thee.”²⁷⁸ (The previous year, Lincoln had represented a client who successfully sued Smith for libel. The abolitionist probably also objected to Lincoln because of the Matson case.)²⁷⁹

²⁷⁵ Chicago Free West, 14 December 1854. Eastman added: “Abraham Lincoln is the candidate of the Tribune. He stands on the Baltimore Platform. He has been supported as a whig, and still claims to be a whig. He is in favor of the Fugitive Slave Law, and will not pledge himself even to the moderate ground of opposing the admission of any more slave states. He was selected one of the state committee of the Republican Party, but repudiated the nomination. This is the position of Mr. Lincoln as we have been informed. We stand open, and anxious to be corrected if we are misinformed. We must have some explanation before we could suggest Mr. Lincoln as candidate for senator. The Tribune may not make a long jump in supporting Mr. Lincoln, for it is not a great jump from Scott and the Baltimore platform to Lincoln – but it strikes us it is very inco[n]sistent with its present republican profession.” Ibid.

²⁷⁶ Joliet Signal, 19 December 1854.

²⁷⁷ John P. Hale to Jonathan Baldwin Turner, Washington, 19 January 1855, Yates Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

²⁷⁸ Abraham Smith to Lincoln, Ridge Farm, Illinois, 31 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. On Smith’s character, see his letter to Owen Lovejoy, Ridge Farm, Illinois, 17 August 1846, Lovejoy Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

²⁷⁹ Donald G. Richter, Lincoln: Twenty Years on the Eastern Prairie (Mattoon, Illinois: United Graphics, 1999), 193-94.

To help combat such opposition, Lincoln enlisted the aid of Congressman Elihu B. Washburne of Galena, a former Whig who had volunteered to do all he could to secure Lincoln's election.²⁸⁰ (The somewhat obstinate and rude Washburne, "strong, defiant, opinionated, and denunciatory in debate," was "a plain, active, earnest man, ambitious and pushing, not at all brilliant, but endowed with a high degree of common-sense.")²⁸¹ In December, Lincoln told him: "I have not ventured to write all the members [of the legislature] in your district, lest some of them should be offended by the indelicacy of the thing – that is, coming from a total stranger. Could you not drop some of them a line?" As time passed, Lincoln grew ever more concerned about his lack of support in northern Illinois. On December 14, he told Washburne that "there must be something wrong about U.S. Senator, at Chicago. My most intimate friends there do not answer my letters; and I can not get a word from them." He asked the Galena congressman to "pump" John Wentworth to discover what was amiss.²⁸²

Washburne complied with Lincoln's appeals, writing not only to legislators but also to Eastman, urging him to reconsider.²⁸³ The abolitionist editor retorted that many anti-Nebraska Democrats "have a repugnance at voting for Lincoln," who "did not give entire satisfaction to the Republicans in his speech in Chicago. Did not take high ground enough."²⁸⁴ Washburne received similar word from Anson Miller of Rockford, who reported that he had "spoken with our Senator and Representatives as to Lincoln for U.S. Senator. They are not committed but one thinks L is

²⁸⁰ Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 14 November 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. On Washburne's role in Lincoln's bid for a Senate seat, see E. B. Washburne, "Abraham Lincoln in Illinois," North American Review, 1885, 316; Mark Washburne, A Biography of Elihu Benjamin Washburne, Congressman, Secretary of State, Envoy Extraordinary (n.p., n.p., 2000), 316-36.

²⁸¹ Indianapolis correspondence by Charles A. Page, 30 April 1865, in Charles A. Page, Letters of a War Correspondent, ed. James R. Gilmore (Boston: L. C. Page, 1899), 375; Carr, The Illini, 177.

²⁸² Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 11 and 14 December 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:293.

²⁸³ Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 19 December 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁸⁴ Eastman to Washburne, Chicago, 14 December 1854, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

not enough Anti Slavery. He wishes him – L – to take the ground of ‘no further extension of slavery’ – ‘no more slave territory.’ Better write Lincoln and suggest to him the absolute importance of taking high ground in the slavery question. Without this he cannot get the vote of the Northern members.”²⁸⁵

In response, Washburne implored Eastman, whom he considered “easy to manage,” to be flexible and magnanimous: “I feel the greatest interest about the Senator. I am afraid our friends will be so impracticable that we may lose the fruits of our splendid victory. We must be yielding and liberal all round. I mentioned Lincoln, not because he had been a whig, but because he is a man of splendid talents, of great probity of character, and because he threw himself into the late fight on the republican platform and made the greatest speech in reply to Douglas ever heard in the State. I know he is with us in sentiment, and in such times as these, when we want big men and true men in the Senate, it seems cruel to strike him down. I thought, also he could combine more strength than any other man in the State. He has great personal popularity, and the entire confidence of all men of all parties. In the election for the legislature the whigs, it must be confessed, have been very liberal to the old democrats and free-soilers who came into the republican movement. I hope the same liberal spirit may continue to guide the new party. – I can say to you, that in the event of the success of Lincoln [neither] you, nor your friends will have any cause to complain. He will not only carry out our views fully in the Senate, but he will be with us in our views and feelings.”²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ Anson S. Miller to E. B. Washburne, Rockford, 18 December 1854, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁸⁶ Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 19 December 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Washburne to Eastman, Washington, 19 December 1854, Eastman Papers, Chicago History Museum.

Eastman did not consult with Lincoln but he did with Herndon, who assured him that his partner was “all right.”²⁸⁷ Herndon later recalled that the “Anti-Slavery men of Chicago – the whole north of this State, knew me early as an abolitionist. Hence trusted me – Sent down a committee to see me and enquired – ‘Can Mr Lincoln be trusted?’” Emphatically, Herndon responded: “I pledge you my personal honor that at the proper time he shall be with us.”²⁸⁸ Herndon was persuasive. Later, Eastman told him that he had visited Springfield “to learn from some thing nearer than public report, and public life, what were Mr. Lincolns particular feelings and scruples in regard to the colored people of the United States. I wanted to know if he was their friend – if he was their friend, we knew he was a politician that could be trusted. You Satisfied me.”²⁸⁹

Lincoln managed to convert another antislavery journalist, Charles Henry Ray, editor of the Galena Jeffersonian, who at first opposed his candidacy. In December, Ray told Washburne: “I cannot well go in for Lincoln or any one of his tribe. I have little faith in the strength of their anti-slavery sentiments, and as the slavery question is the only one likely to be discussed for years yet, let us have some one whose opposition to the institution admits of no question.” Ray confessed that “I am afraid of ‘Abe.’ He is Southern by birth, Southern in his associations and Southern, if I mistake not, in his sympathies. I have thought that he would not come squarely up to the mark in a hand to hand fight with Southern influence and dictation. His wife, you know, is

²⁸⁷ Herndon to Eastman, Springfield, 6 February 1866, copy, Albert J. Beveridge Papers, Library of Congress

²⁸⁸ Herndon to Caroline Dall, Springfield, 3 January 1867 [misdated 1866], Dall Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

²⁸⁹ Zebina Eastman to Herndon, Bristol, 2 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 149-50. It is not clear when Eastman visited Springfield. He states in this document that it was with Cassius Clay, who was in Springfield during the summer of 1854. But the following winter Eastman wrote letters critical of Lincoln. Perhaps Eastman called on Herndon sometime after 11 January 1855. On that date Eastman wrote to Yates saying that he and other radical antislavery men preferred Owen Lovejoy for the Senate and “next to him unquestionably it must be a man who carries no grist to a whig or democratic mill.” Zebina Eastman to Yates, Chicago, 11 January 1855, Yates Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

a Todd, of a pro-Slavery family, and so are all his kin. My candidate must be like Caesar's wife – not only not suspected, but above suspicion.” Ray also hesitated because he did not want to alienate the anti-Nebraska Democrats by supporting a Whig. But, he added, “I do desire to lend a helping hand to check-mate the rascals who are making our government the convenient tool of the slave power; and if I can best do so by going for Lincoln, why, I am on hand.”²⁹⁰

Over the next three weeks, Ray grew to appreciate Lincoln, in part because of Washburne's lobbying efforts. According to Washburne, Ray “is in reality for the man who will be of the most service to him. He looks for an overthrow of the powers that be, and he wants friends in that contingency.”²⁹¹ In January, the Galena congressman reported to Lincoln that Ray, who had won election as clerk of the Illinois State Senate at the beginning of the month, “wants a position in the House next Congress and I am going to write him if you are elected, we will all take hold and help. I think he can do something with some of the Anti-Nebraska Democrats. He also wants the Legislature to do something for him in connection with the census. All these matters can be worked in.”²⁹² (Ray won appointment as a trustee of the Illinois and Michigan Canal at the request of Lincoln.)²⁹³ On January 12, Ray confided to Washburne: “I have made up my mind – this is private – that our best course is to go in strong for Lincoln when the day comes, and I shall so advise our friends of the Anti-Nebraska party, and shall labor to that end.”²⁹⁴

²⁹⁰ Charles H. Ray to Elihu B. Washburne, North Norwich, N.Y., 16 and 24 December 1854, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁹¹ Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 21 December 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁹² Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 17 January 1855, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Ray had urged Washburne to write Lincoln on his behalf. Ray to Washburne, Springfield, 12 January 1855, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁹³ Speech of T. Lyle Dickey, 19 October 1858, Decatur correspondence, 20 October 1858, Illinois State Register (Springfield), 23 October 1858.

²⁹⁴ Charles H. Ray to Elihu B. Washburne, Springfield, 12 January 1855, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

Ray may have been influenced by a talk Lincoln gave on January 4 to the Springfield chapter of the American Colonization Society in which he reviewed the history of the African slave trade and efforts to abolish it. He also introduced resolutions calling for the Illinois legislature to instruct the state's congressional delegation to restore the Missouri Compromise, to work to prevent the admission of Kansas or Nebraska as Slave States, to "use their utmost endeavors to prevent domestic slavery ever being established in any country, or place, where it does not now legally exist," to resist "to their utmost, the now threatened attempt to divide California, in order to erect one portion thereof into a slave-state," and to resist "the now threatened attempt to revive the African slave-trade."²⁹⁵

In addition to Washburne, another U.S. Representative from northern Illinois, Jesse O. Norton of Joliet, helped Lincoln woo legislators from that region. In December, Norton reported to Lincoln from Washington: "I have written to an influential Whig in Oswego (Kendall Co). to have your interests looked to in connexion with their Delegate. I have also written to my friend Strunk of Kankakee. I have also written a kind but pointed letter to Eastman of the Free West. I hope he will see the impropriety of his course." Norton believed "that one of the main things to be done, is to keep down all bickerings in the newspapers, as leading almost certainly to heart burnings & a schism." A month later, the congressman urged Lincoln to accommodate antislavery militants: "it seems to me, that you might, by some concessions, such as could be made by you without any sacrifice of principle, bring the whole free soil element to your support. I speak of those who have hitherto been distinctive 'Free Soilers.' Are you bound to stand by every thing in the Compromise measures of 1850? Could'nt you concede to them a modification of the Fugitive Slave Act? With this & such positions as you can assume in relation to the

²⁹⁵ Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:298-301.

prohibition of Slavery in the Territories & the admission of additional Slave States, I cannot see why these men cannot unite upon you to a man.”²⁹⁶

Lincoln took Norton’s advice, telling legislators that he would not pledge to vote against the Fugitive Slave Act, but he would vote to strip that law “of its obnoxious features.”²⁹⁷ (As noted above, he had publicly declared that he would give Southerners “any legislation for the reclaiming of their fugitives, which should not, in its stringency, be more likely to carry a free man into slavery, than our ordinary criminal laws are to hang an innocent one.”)

In gaining the support of antislavery legislators from northern Illinois, Lincoln received invaluable help from his former congressional colleague, Joshua Giddings. The day after Christmas, Washburne informed Lincoln that “I have this moment had a long talk with Giddings and he is your strongest possible friend and says he would walk clear to Illinois to elect you. He will do anything in the world to aid you, and he will to-day write his views fully on the whole subject to Owen Lovejoy, in order that he may present them to all the freesoilers in the Legislature. He will advise them most strongly to go for you en masse.” As promised, Giddings wrote to Lovejoy twice and showed the letters to other Illinoisans.²⁹⁸

Lincoln’s good friend David Davis, who lobbied General Assembly members, claimed that he “got some Abolitionists to go for Lincoln.”²⁹⁹ Other Eighth Circuit lawyers, including

²⁹⁶ Jesse O. Norton to Lincoln, Washington, 20 December 1854, 20 January 1855, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁹⁷ Reminiscences of Thomas J. Henderson, typescript, p. 10, Ida M. Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

²⁹⁸ Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 26 December 1854 and 20 January 1855, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

²⁹⁹ David Davis, interview with Herndon, 19 September 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 347.

Leonard Swett and T. Lyle Dickey, also worked on Lincoln's behalf. But a few Radicals, like Abraham Smith of Bureau County, remained obdurate.³⁰⁰

Another hurdle Lincoln faced was the same intrastate regional rivalry that had helped defeat his bid for the commissionership of the General Land Office five years earlier. In December, Washburne advised Lincoln that an influential voter in Winnebago County "alleged that the Springfield influence has always been against us in the North, and that if you should be elected the North would be overlooked for the center and the South part of the State."³⁰¹

"Astonished" by this objection, Lincoln assured Washburne that "For a Senator to be the impartial representative of his whole State, is so plain a duty, that I pledge myself to the observance of it without hesitation; but not without some mortification that any one should suspect me of an inclination to the contrary." Citing his record in the General Assembly, where he had supported the Illinois and Michigan Canal (a pet project of northern Illinois) and other measures of interest to that part of the state, he protested that he would be "surprized if it can be pointed out that in any instance, the North sought our aid, and failed to get it." Similarly, while in Congress he had offered his "feeble service" to promote the interests of northern Illinois. "As a Senator, I should claim no right, as I should feel no inclination, to give the central portion of the state any preference over the North, or any other portion of it."³⁰²

By the time the legislature convened in early January, Lincoln's hard work lining up the antislavery members paid dividends; Washburne, Norton, Giddings, Ray, and others had overcome the objections of most abolitionists. Lincoln later told Norton: "Through the untiring efforts of friends, among whom yourself and Washburne were chief, I finally surmounted the

³⁰⁰ Abraham Smith to Lincoln, Ridge Farm, Illinois, 31 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁰¹ Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 12 December 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁰² Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 19 December 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:295.

difficulty with the extreme Anti-Slavery men, and got all their votes, Lovejoy's included."³⁰³ To help win the vote of abolitionist Senator Wait Talcott, who represented Winnebago and neighboring counties in the North, Washburne suggested that Talcott hire Lincoln to represent him in a major patent infringement case.³⁰⁴ Lincoln appealed directly to Talcott and won his support.³⁰⁵ "I know you Talcotts are all strong abolitionists," he said, "and while I have had to be very careful in what I said I want you to understand that your opinions and wishes have produced a much stronger impression on my mind than you may think."³⁰⁶ Lincoln persuaded William D. Henderson to lobby legislators from western Illinois on behalf of himself rather than a local favorite, Archibald Williams.³⁰⁷

Thus Lincoln was understandably confident that he could win the senatorship. Of the 100 members of the General Assembly, a majority opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act. In the House of Representatives, Lincoln estimated that the Whigs and Anti-Nebraska Democrats outnumbered the regular Democrats forty-four to thirty-one; their majority in the senate, however, was only thirteen to twelve.³⁰⁸

³⁰³ Lincoln to Norton, Springfield, 16 February 1855, Basler and Basler, eds., Collected Works of Lincoln, Second Supplement, 9. Porter Sargent, whom Washburne had lobbied on behalf of Lincoln, told the Galena congressman that Lincoln had "expressed his obligation to you in very strong terms & that he appreciated you as a warm personal friend." Sargent to Washburne,

Savanna, 16 July 1860, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁰⁴ Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 17 January 1855, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. In fact, Lincoln was hired to help represent the interests of Talcott in the important case of McCormick v. Talcott et al., better known as the McCormick reaper case. Talcott was an organizer of the Free Soil party and a conductor on the underground railroad. Ralph Emerson, "Mr. & Mrs. Ralph Emerson's Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln" (pamphlet; Rockford, Illinois: privately printed, 1909), 14. Emerson was Talcott's son-in-law.

³⁰⁵ Melancton Smith to E. B. Washburne, Rockford, 21 March 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; William Jayne, interviewed by J. McCan Davis, Springfield, Illinois, 22 October 1898, Ida Tarbell Papers, Allegheny College.

³⁰⁶ Emerson, "Personal Recollections of Lincoln," 13.

³⁰⁷ W. D. Henderson to David Davis, Aledo, Illinois, 9 May 1861, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library; Henderson to Lincoln, Oquawka, Illinois, 11 December 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁰⁸ Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 9 February 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:303-4.

The chief business before the legislature was choosing a U.S. senator, a contest which both sides desperately sought to win. As Washburne put it, the “whole country is looking to the election of Senator in our State, and should the Anti-Nebraska men fail to elect, a shout of triumph would go up from the Nebraskaites that would make us all hang our heads.”³⁰⁹ In December, Lincoln reported that a leader of the regular Democrats had written to a legislator saying, in effect, that the anti-Nebraska forces “have a clear majority of at least nine, on joint ballot. They outnumber us, but we must outmanage them. Douglas must be sustained. We must elect the Speaker; and we must elect a Nebraska U S. Senator, or elect none at all.” Lincoln speculated that all pro-Nebraska members of the General Assembly received similar letters.³¹⁰ The Democracy justly feared that if an anti-Nebraska candidate won the senatorship, the nation would interpret it as a repudiation of Douglas and his version of popular sovereignty. From Washington, Yates informed Lincoln: “There is the greatest anxiety here as to the election of a Senator from our State – The peculiar connection of Douglas with the State & the Nebraska question causes that election to be looked to with more interest than that of any other State.”³¹¹

Upon convening, the General Assembly filled all its offices save one with Democrats. By a vote of 40-24, Thomas J. Turner, an ardent prohibitionist and militant abolitionist, became speaker of the House.³¹² George T. Brown and Charles H. Ray were chosen secretary of the senate and enrolling and engrossing clerk respectively. Only one Whig was elected in either house. “I do not say that the whigs have any pledges in return for this liberality,” a journalist observed, “but as all their efforts, hopes, and energies are concentrated upon the great object of

³⁰⁹ Washburne to Zebina Eastman, Washington, 19 December 1854, Eastman Papers, Chicago History Museum.

³¹⁰ Lincoln to Thomas J. Henderson, Springfield, 15 December 1854, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:293-94. Lincoln had been informed that Charles Lanphier, editor of the Springfield Register, had written such a letter to a legislator. G.F. Powers to Lincoln, Olney, 8 December 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³¹¹ Yates to Lincoln, Washington, 22 December 1854, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³¹² St. Clair Tribune, 13 January 1855, in Cole, Era of the Civil War, 209n.

securing the election of Senator to the U.S. Senate there can be no question but they will expect favors in return.”³¹³

Many Whigs – including Cyrus Edwards, Joseph Gillespie, Don Morrison, Richard Yates, and Archibald Williams – hoped to become a U.S. senator as a result of such anticipated reciprocity. On January 6, Lincoln informed Washburne that the prospects of those men were poor, for he himself was the front-runner with twenty-six committals; no one else had more than ten.³¹⁴ He was supplementing his extensive correspondence with personal appeals to legislators, now that they were assembled in Springfield.³¹⁵ One recalled that when Lincoln approached them, his “manner was agreeable and unassuming; he was not forward in pressing his case upon the attention of members.” Yet before the conversation ended, the topic of the senatorship would arise, and Lincoln would say, in essence: “Gentlemen, this is rather a delicate subject for me to talk upon; but I must confess that I would be glad of your support for the office, if you shall conclude that I am the proper person for it.”³¹⁶

The Democrats anticipated that if the incumbent, James Shields, were unable to prevail, the legislature would adjourn without choosing his successor, thus leaving the seat vacant temporarily.³¹⁷ Shields had injured his reelection chances by supporting the Kansas-Nebraska Act despite his opposition to it in principle.³¹⁸ Anti-Nebraska Democrats like William H. Bissell and Lyman Trumbull were regarded as possibilities, though Bissell’s poor health seemed to

³¹³ Other Democrats elected included Daniel S. Evans, former editor of La Salle Herald; Wesley Davidson, assistant sergeant at arms from Johnson County; W. J. Heath, sergeant at arms; and Isaac S. Warmouth, assistant clerk. The Whig was Edwin T. Bridges of La Salle. Joliet Signal, 9 January 1855.

³¹⁴ Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 6 January 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:303-4.

³¹⁵ Few letters by Lincoln appealing for help in this election have survived, but his incoming mail indicates that he wrote many more. Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

³¹⁶ Reminiscences of Elijah M. Haines in Browne, Every-Day Life of Lincoln, 2nd ed., 163.

³¹⁷ Chicago Weekly Democrat, 11 August 1855

³¹⁸ Salmon P. Chase to Henry Reed, Columbus, Ohio, 11 November 1858, copy, Chase Papers, microfilm edition, ed. John Niven.

disqualify him. Lincoln worried that pro-Nebraska Democrats, realizing that Shields's prospects were hopeless, might unite behind Bissell, but that fear proved illusory.³¹⁹ Douglas insisted that the party "stand by Shields to the last and make no compromises." If the Irishman were to lose, then the Democrats could denounce their opponents as nativist bigots who opposed Shields simply because he had been born abroad.³²⁰

By refusing to meet with the House, the senate Democrats delayed the vote. On January 12, the ever optimistic Shields said of the Anti-Nebraskaites: "A fusionist party cannot hold together long. Time kills it. Delay has killed them."³²¹ As the days passed, those Democrats who were less optimistic about Shields's prospects grew anxious. On January 17, James W. Sheahan, editor of Douglas's organ (the Chicago Times), wrote in alarm to Charles Lanphier at Springfield: "I think that all hope of electing Shields is gone: that the postponement of the election is a hazardous matter." Anti-Nebraskaites "well know this is their only chance, & will let no means be untried to get a man. I think therefore that too long trifling with Shields' name will not bring a vote to us, but will close some men against us, in which case they may slip over to the opposition. A new man should be talked of at once; and before the election, let a caucus be held, at which Shields' declination should be read by some one." But who should that new man be? Sheahan thought Governor Joel Matteson "the most available." Matteson, who discreetly opposed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, had managed to ingratiate himself with both factions of the

³¹⁹ Lincoln to Richard Yates, Springfield, 14 January 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, First Supplement, 25-26.

³²⁰ Douglas to James W. Sheahan, Washington, 18 December 1854 and 6 February 1855, Johannsen, ed., Letters of Douglas, 331, 333.

³²¹ Shields to Charles Lanphier, Washington, 12 January 1855, Lanphier Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

Democratic party.³²² By 1854, he had become “probably the most popular and trusted man in the state – so considered by all parties, and in his own political association he was singularly free from the jealousies and rivalries that usually hang on the heels of a rising public man.”³²³

Gustave Koerner called Matteson “a very timid politician” for whom “the Whigs had no personal dislike.”³²⁴ He “entertained a great deal and even among his political opponents the genial democratic Governor had many friends.”³²⁵ But if the popular Matteson were to become a senate candidate, the Democrats had to move quickly, for another aspirant, William B. Ogden of Chicago, “a man of wealth and overweening personal vanity,” was busily bribing legislators to support his candidacy.³²⁶ “Ogden has bought up some of the doubtful men,” Sheahan reported, “& unless our man goes to work, he will find the market empty. Hopes ought to be held out to Matteson that Shields will not be in the way.”³²⁷

Though unannounced as a candidate for the senatorship, Matteson, also a wealthy man, was in fact quietly bribing legislators himself. Elected governor in 1852, he would become celebrated for his corruption. As he was about to leave office in 1856, he fraudulently redeemed \$388,528 worth of twenty-year-old canal scrip for new state bonds. The scrip had already been redeemed once but had not been cancelled; Matteson knowingly enriched himself at the expense

³²² Matteson to Douglas, Springfield, 23 April 1858, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago; “Biography of Governor Joel A. Matteson,” Western Democratic Review, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 1 January 1855.

³²³ “A Glance at Our Past Governors,” Quincy Herald, n.d., copied in an unidentified Springfield newspaper, clipping collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

³²⁴ Koerner, Memoirs, 1:601, 608.

³²⁵ Caroline Owsley Brown, “Springfield Society before the Civil War,” in [Edwards Brown, Jr.], Rewarding Years Recalled (privately published, 1973), 37.

³²⁶ Chicago Daily Democrat, 30 August 1850.

³²⁷ J. W. Sheahan to Charles Lanphier, Chicago, 17 January 1855, Lanphier Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield. The danger that some state senators would be bought up was mentioned by William Butler. Butler to Richard Yates, Springfield, 2 January 1855 [misdated 1854], Yates Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

of the state. When the General Assembly investigated this scheme in 1859, it became known as The Great Canal Scrip Fraud, “the biggest governmental scandal in Illinois’ first century.”³²⁸ The following year it was reported that “Matteson’s money is being used like water in bringing illegal voters into the State.”³²⁹ An anti-Nebraska Democrat, George T. Allen, who called pro-Nebraska Democrats “a den of thieves, drunkards gamblers and blackguards,” told Trumbull in 1866 that “the Democratic, or Nebraska, members of the Legislature employed every means to buy my vote for Matteson.”³³⁰ Evidently aware of such bribery attempts, the Quincy Whig rejoiced that the Nebraskaites had failed to “buy or bully a sufficient number of members to reverse” the people’s “plainly expressed will.”³³¹ The Chicago Democrat declared that “it is time our Legislature was composed of other than marketable material.”³³²

The first legislator approached by Matteson was John Strunk, a Whig from Kankakee who at the beginning of the legislative session had told Lincoln that he “would walk a hundred miles” to elect him.³³³ In February 1855, Lincoln reported that “Strunk was pledged to me, which Matteson knew, but he succeeded in persuading him that I stood no chance of an election, and in getting a pledge from him to go for him as second choice.” Strunk was “a warm friend” of the governor.³³⁴ Matteson then got anti-Nebraska Democrats E. O. Hills, Gavion D. A. Parks, David

³²⁸ Robert P. Howard, Mostly Good and Competent Men: Illinois Governors, 1818-1988 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Society, 1988), 99-107; Robert P. Howard, “The Great Canal Scrip Fraud: The Downfall of Governor Joel A. Matteson,” Selected Papers in Illinois History, 1980 (Springfield: Illinois State Historical Society, 1982), 25-30. The investigation conducted by Senate Finance Committee in 1859 caused Matteson to return the money (minus interest) to the state, and charges were dropped. Wayne C. Temple, Lincoln’s Connections with the Illinois & Michigan Canal, His Return from Congress in 1848, and His Invention (Springfield: Illinois Bell, 1986), 84-85.

³²⁹ Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 26 October 1860.

³³⁰ Allen to Trumbull, Alton, 19 January 1856 and 14 June 1866, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress. The agent who approached Allen was L. F. [Mebrilles?].

³³¹ Quincy Whig, n.d., copied in the Chicago Tribune, 23 February 1855.

³³² Chicago Daily Democrat, 6 February 1855.

³³³ Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 9 February 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:304.

³³⁴ Springfield correspondence, [8 February 1855], Chicago Tribune, 13 February 1855.

Strawn, Henry S. Baker, A. H. Trapp, and Frederick S. Day to follow suit, even though he was assuring other legislators that he would support Douglas “from beginning to end.”³³⁵ With these seven votes in hand, Matteson then assured the pro-Nebraska Democrats that he could win if he had their support after they had “made a respectable show by voting a few ballots for other men.” Thus, “by holding up to their greedy eyes this amount of capital,” Matteson “induced the Nebraska men to drop Shields and take him en masse.” The pro-Nebraska Democrats had gained control of the state senate with the defection of Whig Don Morrison and anti-Nebraska Democrat Uri Osgood, who was allegedly “bought outright.”³³⁶ The senate then refused to hold a joint session with the House to elect a Senator until Matteson had lined up the necessary votes. And so it was not until February 8 that the joint session took place.³³⁷

Though Matteson had tried to operate behind the scenes, rumors began circulating about his candidacy. Those rumors may have ultimately cost him the election.³³⁸ In late January, Mary Stuart reported from Springfield that the “senatorial election has not yet come on, but it is believed now that Gov. Matteson has a better chance of success than any other, of the numerous candidates.”³³⁹ Richard J. Ogelsby heard reports that Lincoln’s “chance is growing small by degrees.”³⁴⁰ The anti-Nebraska Democrat John M. Palmer told his wife: “I think Gov. Matteson will be elected Senator. The chances are that both wings of the democracy will unite on him. He

³³⁵ Thomas L. Harris to Douglas, Springfield, 25 January 1855, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

³³⁶ Charles H. Ray to Elihu Washburne, Springfield, 12 January 1855, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

³³⁷ Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 9 February 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:304-5; Lincoln to Jesse Olds, Springfield, 16 February 1855, Basler and Basler, eds., Collected Works of Lincoln, Second Supplement, 9-10. On January 12, the Senate agreed to meet on the 31st, but a snowstorm forced a delay.

³³⁸ Paul Selby to Richard Yates, Jacksonville, 15 February 1855, Yates Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

³³⁹ Mary N. Stuart to Elizabeth T. Stuart, Springfield, 28 January 1855, Stuart-Hay Papers Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

³⁴⁰ Richard J. Ogelsby to Richard Yates, Decatur, 27 January 1855, Yates Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

is anti Slavery in all his antecedents and is a decided anti-Douglas man which is the real point involved in the controversy. The great end we have in view is the organization of the Democratic party on the basis of the personal independence of its Members. Shields goes now which will be a warning that Douglas cannot disregard. He will see the handwriting upon the wall.”³⁴¹

On February 8, the statehouse galleries and lobby were packed as the voting began. On the initial ballot, Lincoln received forty-five votes, a mere five short of victory. (Because one senator persistently abstained, only fifty votes were required to win.) Those five votes could have been provided by Norman B. Judd, Burton C. Cook, Henry Baker, George T. Allen, and John M. Palmer, anti-Nebraska Democrats all. But adamant in their refusal to vote for a Whig, they united instead behind Lyman Trumbull, an antislavery Democrat from Alton who had just won a seat in the U.S. House. (Baker and Allen lived in Madison County, part of Trumbull’s district.) One legislator, Samuel C. Parks, later explained that those five “had been elected in part by Democrats and they not only personally preferred Mr. Trumbull, but considered his election necessary to consolidate the union between all those who were opposed to repeal of the Missouri Compromise and to the new policy upon the subject of slavery which Mr. Douglas and his friends were laboring so hard to inaugurate; they insisted that the election of Mr. Trumbull to the Senate would secure thousands of democratic votes to the Anti Nebraska Party who would be driven off by the election of Mr. Lincoln – that the Whig Party were nearly a unit in opposition to Mr. Douglas, so that the election of the favorite candidate of the majority would give no particular strength in that quarter; and they manifested a fixed purpose to vote steadily for Mr. Trumbull and not at all for Mr. Lincoln and thus compel the friends of Mr. Lincoln to vote for their man.” Judd and the others “kept aloof from the caucuses of both parties during the winter”

³⁴¹ John M. Palmer to his wife, Springfield, 31 January 1855, Palmer Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

because they “could not act with the Democrats from principle and would not act with the Whigs from policy.”³⁴²

This was not the first time that Trumbull had been considered for the senate; in 1844, he had been an active candidate until the day of the Democratic caucus.³⁴³ But the Democrats passed him by, partly because of his condescending manner and aloof personality. Indeed, “he was regarded as the most cold-blooded man who had ever appeared in public life in Illinois,” a “man of magnificent intellect but cold as an iceberg and utterly destitute of heart.”³⁴⁴ Thomas Ford, who said Trumbull “was devoured by ambition for office,” thought him “remarkable for a small, lean face, giving promise of narrow, cramped views, great prejudices and industry in finding fault with others.”³⁴⁵ In 1846, Gustave Koerner described Trumbull as the “most unscrupulous fellow on earth.” Referring to Trumbull’s unsuccessful bid for a seat in Congress, Koerner declared that the “slanders, contrivances, intrigues & conspiracies resorted to by him in this last canvass would fill a volume.”³⁴⁶ Born and raised in Connecticut, Trumbull had moved in his early twenties to Illinois, where he practiced law, entered politics, and earned respect, if not affection, for his powerful intellect, “indomitable industry,” skill as a debater, and mastery of constitutional law.³⁴⁷ The pro-Nebraska Democrats, however, regarded him as a combination of Judas Iscariot and Benedict Arnold.

³⁴² Parks’s statement for Herndon, [1866], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 537.

³⁴³ E. Peck to Stephen A. Douglas, Springfield, 1 December 1854, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

³⁴⁴ Carr, The Illini, 176; Thomas J. Pickett, “Reminiscences of Lincoln,” Lincoln, Nebraska, Daily State Journal, 12 April 1881.

³⁴⁵ Thomas Ford, A History of Illinois: From its Commencement as a State in 1818 to 1847, ed. Rodney O. Davis (1854; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1995), 272-73.

³⁴⁶ Gustave Koerner to John D. Caton, Vandalia, 17 August 1846, Caton Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁴⁷ Koerner, Memoirs, 1:425; Publications of the Illinois State Historical Society, 9 (1904): 44-45.

Lincoln understood that Trumbull's supporters would be hard to woo. In mid-January, he confided to Yates: "I may start with 20 or 25 votes, but I think I can, in a few ballots, get up to 48 But how I am to get the three additional votes I do not yet see." He predicted that the contest may degenerate into "a general scramble," in which case anyone, including Trumbull, might win.³⁴⁸ A journalist speculated that Trumbull could have as many as eighteen votes on the initial ballot.³⁴⁹

As it turned out, Trumbull received only five votes on that ballot, while Lincoln's closest competitor, Shields, had forty-one. Over the next five ballots, Lincoln's vote declined while Shields's held steady and Trumbull's grew. When it became clear that Lincoln could not win, Stephen T. Logan moved for adjournment till the morning; the anti-Nebraska Democrats combined with their estranged party colleagues to defeat the motion.³⁵⁰ The seventh ballot created "intense excitement" as the pro-Nebraska Democrats suddenly switched from Shields to Matteson, who received forty-four votes though he had not gotten a single one earlier.³⁵¹ On the eighth ballot the governor picked up two more votes while Lincoln's total dwindled to twenty-seven and Trumbull's swelled to eighteen. The following ballot showed Lincoln with fifteen, Trumbull with thirty-five, and Matteson with forty-seven. Sensing that the governor was about to win, some Nebraskaites "got scared, and loudly protested they would rather have Lincoln or

³⁴⁸ Lincoln to Yates, Springfield, 14 January 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, First Supplement, 26.

³⁴⁹ Springfield correspondence, 17 January, Ottawa Free Trader, 20 January 1855.

³⁵⁰ Springfield correspondence, [8 February 1855], Chicago Tribune, 13 February 1855.

³⁵¹ John W. Bunn, interviewed by John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 21 August 1879, Michael Burlingame, ed., An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay's Interviews and Essays (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 39.

Lovejoy elected than Trumbull.” Jokingly Lovejoy told them, “Boys, if you want me elected, you have got no time to lose, for it will be too late after another ballot.”³⁵²

Lincoln feared that Matteson would win on the next ballot. The governor, however, was hoist with his own petard, for Shields’ supporters deeply resented Matteson’s failure to back the incumbent. If a Democratic caucus had been held in a timely fashion, they believed, Shields would have won or, at the very least, the election of a senator would have been postponed; but to enhance his own prospects, Matteson had scotched the proposal for a caucus until it was too late. Some of Shields’ more angry friends determined that Matteson would not gain by that move, and though they did not vote against the governor, they “were prompt to convey to the camp of the enemy all the movements of Gov. Matteson.” Shields’s allies told the anti-Nebraska forces about Matteson’s “loan of money to certain Whigs and free soilers who were to vote for him, and also that certain men were voting for Judge Trumbull as a democrat a few times until both Shields and Lincoln could be dropped and Matteson brought into the field.” Some legislators, “Matteson men in disguise,” did not favor Trumbull yet supported him for a time. They “had been into all sorts of railroad and State fund speculation” with the governor and “were to desert Judge Trumbull whenever their votes could elect Gov. Matteson.”³⁵³ Having been tipped off, Lincoln and his allies threw their support to Trumbull, who won on the tenth ballot, receiving fifty-one votes to Matteson’s forty-seven.

Lincoln feared that some of Trumbull’s supporters – including Hills, Parks, Strawn, Day, and Baker, men “known to have been on the most friendly relations with Gov. M. for years” – might

³⁵² Springfield correspondence, [8 February 1855], Chicago Tribune, 13 February 1855. Pro-Douglas men, would have preferred the election of Lincoln, Archibald Williams, William B. Ogden, William B. Kellogg or Martin P. Sweet to Trumbull, whom they reviled as a turncoat. Springfield correspondence, 9 February, Alton Telegraph, 12 February 1855; Illinois State Journal, 9 February 1855.

³⁵³ Chicago Weekly Democrat, 11 August 1855.

well defect to Matteson unless, as he put it, “they should be kept on T[rumbull’s side] by seeing my remaining men coming on to him. I accordingly gave the intimation which my friends acted upon, electing T[rumbull on] that ballot.” It was, he said, an impulsive decision, made in the “heat of battle.” Lincoln explained that “few, if any, of my remaining 15 men would have gone over from me without my direction; and I gave the direction, simultaneously with forming the resolution to do it.”³⁵⁴

Some of Lincoln’s fifteen die-hard supporters “wept like children” at their man’s appeal to switch to Trumbull.³⁵⁵ Among them was Stephen T. Logan, who “shed tears of anguish.”³⁵⁶ One senator (George W. Waters) refused to vote for Trumbull, going instead for Archibald Williams. (When a friend of his remarked he would have done what Waters did, “Lincoln quietly replied, ‘Well, you would have done wrong, that’s all.’”) The rest cast ballots for Trumbull “with the most obstinate reluctance. It was only after Lincoln had begged him to do so that Logan amid breathless silence got up and changed his vote, and Trumbull was chosen.”³⁵⁷ Samuel C. Parks recalled that “Judge Logan was devoted for Mr. Lincoln all winter and did all he could for him; he and some others of Mr. Lincoln’s friends in the Legislature seemed to think that the conduct of Judd and Co. in compelling us to vote for Mr. Trumbull was ungenerous and selfish.”³⁵⁸

³⁵⁴ Springfield correspondence, [8 February 1855], Chicago Tribune, 13 February 1855; Lincoln to Jesse O. Norton, Springfield, 16 February 1855, Basler and Basler, eds., Collected Works of Lincoln, Second Supplement, 10. See also Jane M. Johns, “A Momentous Incident in the History of Illinois,” Journal of the Illinois State Historical Society 10 (1918): 548-60.

³⁵⁵ Chicago Tribune, 19 May 1860.

³⁵⁶ Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 8 December, New York Herald, 15 December 1860.

³⁵⁷ John W. Bunn, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 21 August 1879, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 39; Thomas J. Pickett, “Reminiscences of Lincoln,” Lincoln, Nebraska, Daily State Journal, 12 April 1881.

³⁵⁸ Parks, statement for Herndon, [1866], in Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 538.

When Trumbull's victory was announced, jubilation reigned among the anti-Nebraska forces.³⁵⁹ A "tremendous shout" rang out in the lobby of Representatives Hall, which "was jammed full from top to bottom."³⁶⁰ The New York Tribune hailed the "glorious result" as "a fitting finale to the Repeal of the Missouri Compromise by Douglas & Co."³⁶¹ Zebina Eastman crowed that "Of all the candidates named for the station, the successful one was the most obnoxious to the aspiring leader [Douglas], and whose election is the most mortifying to him personally and politically."³⁶² Similarly, the Chicago Tribune, which called Trumbull "a man of more real talent and power than Abram Lincoln," thought that "a more decisive and emphatic rebuke to Stephen A. Douglas could not have been administered."³⁶³

If Matteson and his friends did resort to bribery, which seems highly likely, then it is easy to understand why Lincoln rejoiced at thwarting the governor's scheme. "I regret my defeat moderately," he told Washburne, "but I am not nervous about it. I could have headed off every combination and been elected, had it not been for Matteson's double game – and the governor's defeat now gives me more pleasure than my own gives me pain." Lincoln was not gloating or being vindictive; he was genuinely offended by Matteson's tactics and regarded the governor's defeat as an ideological triumph, a rebuke to Democrats who had supported the Kansas-Nebraska Act.³⁶⁴ "On the whole," he mused to Washburne, "it is perhaps as well for our general cause that Trumbull is elected. The Neb[raska] men confess that they hate it worse than any thing that could have happened. It is a great consolation to see them worse whipped than I am. I tell them it

³⁵⁹ Anson Miller to Elihu B. Washburne, Rockford, 25 February 1855, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁶⁰ Thomas Drummond to E. B. Washburne, Chicago, 12 February 1855, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁶¹ New York Tribune, 9 February 1855.

³⁶² Chicago Free West, 15 February 1855.

³⁶³ Chicago Tribune, 9 February 1855.

³⁶⁴ William Lee Miller, Lincoln's Virtues: An Ethical Biography (New York: Knopf, 2002), 313-14.

is their own fault – that they had abundant opportunity to choose between him & me, which they declined, and instead forced it on me to decide between him & Matteson.”³⁶⁵ Trumbull confirmed Lincoln’s observation, reporting that the pro-Nebraska Democrats “are exhibiting towards me a great deal of ill natured & malignant feeling.”³⁶⁶ The editor of the Chicago Times told Douglas that Trumbull’s election constituted “the severest blow we could have received.”³⁶⁷ The Chicago Democratic Press echoed that sentiment: “no other man could have been elected to the Senate whose presence there would be regarded by Mr. Douglas as a more signal rebuke.”³⁶⁸

Though pleased that he had prevented what would have been interpreted as a victory for Douglas, Lincoln acknowledged that it “was rather hard for the 44 to have to surrender to the 5 – and a less good humored man than I, perhaps would not have consented to it – and it would not have been done without my consent. I could not, however, let the whole political result go to ruin, on a point merely personal to myself.”³⁶⁹

Despite the stoic tone of Lincoln’s letters, his failure to win the senate seat plunged him into a gloomy depression. As Herndon noted, Lincoln “thirsted for public notice and hungered – longed for approbation and when he did not get that notice or that approbation – was not thoroughly appreciated [–] he writhed under it.”³⁷⁰ According to Elihu B. Washburne, “no event in Mr. Lincoln’s entire political career . . . brought to him so much disappointment and chagrin as his defeat for United States Senator in 1855.”³⁷¹ Shortly after the election, Joseph C. Howell

³⁶⁵ Lincoln to Washburne, Springfield, 9 February 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:306.

³⁶⁶ Lyman Trumbull to Salmon P. Chase, Alton, 23 March 1855, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³⁶⁷ Johannsen, Douglas, 464.

³⁶⁸ Chicago Democratic Press, n.d., copied in the Chicago Tribune, 10 February 1855.

³⁶⁹ Lincoln to William H. Henderson, Springfield, 21 February 1855, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:306-7.

³⁷⁰ Herndon, “Lincoln’s Ambition,” Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁷¹ Washburne, “Lincoln in Illinois,” 316.

reported that “Lincoln like his friends feels very much hurt.”³⁷² Samuel C. Parks, a pro-Lincoln legislator, believed that his candidate “was very much disappointed, for . . . it was the height of his ambition to get into the United States Senate.”³⁷³ When Parks consoled him by saying he would surely win a senate seat in 1858, Lincoln predicted that “the taste for the senatorship would get out of his mouth” by then.³⁷⁴ Joseph Gillespie, another legislator who was active on Lincoln’s behalf, accompanied him home after the defeat and later recalled, “I never saw him so dejected. He said the fates seemed to be against him and he thought he would never strive for office again[.] He could bear defeat inflicted by his enemies with a pretty good grace; but it was hard to be wounded in the house of his friends.”³⁷⁵ One of those friends was John M. Palmer, an antislavery Democrat who had refused Lincoln’s request for his vote. Palmer explained that he had alienated his party by opposing the Kansas-Nebraska Act and could not vote for any candidate but a Democrat for the senate. He recollected that Lincoln “felt hurt and was a little angry.”³⁷⁶

However dejected he may have been, Lincoln, at a party in honor of the senator-elect, cheerfully responded to a query about his disappointment by saying he was “not too disappointed

³⁷² Joseph C. Howell to Yates, Springfield, 11 February 1855, Yates Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

³⁷³ Parks’s statement for Herndon, [1866], Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 538.

³⁷⁴ LeRoy H. Fischer, ed., “Samuel C. Parks’s Reminiscences of Abraham Lincoln,”

Lincoln Herald 68 (Spring 1966): 11.

³⁷⁵ Gillespie to [M. D. Hardin], Edwardsville, 22 April 1880, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum. Beveridge stated, “When the struggle was over, young Whitney went to Lincoln’s office and found his hero in the deepest depths of blackest melancholy. Never before or thereafter did Lincoln’s associate on the Circuit see him so utterly dejected.” Beveridge cited an undated letter from Whitney to Weik in the Weik Papers. Beveridge, Lincoln, 2:287. But elsewhere, Whitney says he saw Lincoln utterly dejected after his second defeat for the senate four years later. Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 622.

³⁷⁶ Washington correspondence, 30 September [1892?], Chicago Evening Post, clipping in the Lincoln Collection, Vertical File, “Reminiscences,” folder 3, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

to congratulate my friend Trumbull.”³⁷⁷ Later he praised Trumbull as “a peculiar man; peculiar for his rigid honesty, his high-toned independence, & his unswerving devotion to principle. A more conscientious man can not be found. He can not be bought; he can not be bribed; he can not be frightened out of what he knows to be right. I wish we had more such men as Lyman Trumbull than we have in public office.”³⁷⁸

Lincoln soon recovered his good spirits and expressed to Samuel C. Parks his belief “that his defeat was the best thing that ever happened to him.”³⁷⁹ To young Shelby Cullom, who offered condolences, he replied: “my boy, don’t worry; it will all come right in the end.”³⁸⁰ When asked if he were bitter about Judd’s failure to support him, Lincoln replied: “I can’t harbor enmity to any one; it’s not my nature.”³⁸¹ Lincoln’s magnanimity would eventually pay dividends, for the short, chunky, red-faced Judd was to play a key role in promoting his political fortunes.³⁸²

Not all of Lincoln’s friends were so magnanimous. According to Parks, “There was a great deal of dissatisfaction throughout the State at the result of the election.” Because the Whigs “constituted a vast majority of the Anti Nebraska Party,” they understandably “thought they were entitled to the Senate and that Mr. Lincoln by his contest with Mr. Douglas had earned it.”³⁸³

³⁷⁷ White, Trumbull, 45. Cf. Lincoln to Trumbull, Springfield, 3 February 1859, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 2:355–56. John W. Bunn recalled that there “was a party that night at Ninian Edwards: Lincoln was the lion of the evening—surrounded with condoling friends most of whom told him they would have preferred Matteson to Trumbull. But Lincoln reassured them and told them it was all right &c.” John W. Bunn, interview with John G. Nicolay, Springfield, 21 August 1879, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 40.

³⁷⁸ R. E. Hoyt reported that Lincoln said this while riding on a train between Springfield and Decatur. Unidentified letter, probably in a newspaper, Chicago, 4 October [no year indicated], copy of a fragment, Trumbull Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library.

³⁷⁹ Fischer, ed., “Parks’s Reminiscences of Lincoln,” 11.

³⁸⁰ Frank G. Carpenter, “From Plowboy to Senator: Shelby Cullom Talks of His Career,” Chicago Sunday Times-Herald, 3 November 1895, p. 47.

³⁸¹ Whitney, Life on the Circuit, ed. Angle, 150. See also Lincoln to George W. Dole, Gurdon S. Hubbard, and William H. Brown, Springfield, 14 December 1859, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:507-8.

³⁸² Washington States, n.d., copied in the Illinois State Journal, 5 March 1861.

³⁸³ Parks’s statement for Herndon, [1866], in Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants, 538. See also John H. Adams to Elihu B. Washburne, [Springfield], 10 February 1855, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

David Davis said that if he had been in Lincoln's place, he would not have capitulated. To a friend Davis wrote that he did not "feel satisfied" with the election of Trumbull, who, he said, "has been a Democrat all his life – dyed in the wool – as ultra as he could be." Davis thought Lincoln "ought to have been elected. . . . I had spent a good deal of time at Springfield getting things arranged for Lincoln, and it was supposed that his election was certain. I was necessarily absent the day of the election, and have been glad of it, for I reckon that Trumbull's election is better than that the matter should have been passed over. But if I had been there, there were ten members of the Legislature would have fully appreciated the fact that 46 men should not yield their preference to 5."³⁸⁴ Stephen T. Logan, "overcome with grief and emotion," declared in the legislature that antislavery men who refused to vote for Lincoln had exhausted his patience: "A feather was light – but it was the last feather that broke the camel's back. They have laid on us that last feather, and my back is broke."³⁸⁵ (Abraham Smith, a conductor on the underground railroad, claimed that his opposition to Lincoln may have been the "feather that turned the scale.")³⁸⁶ Joseph Gillespie angrily complained to Lincoln: "I am tired of being dragooned by some half dozen men who are determined either to rule or ruin. I am out of all temper with and have no faith in the honesty of men who insist that ten whigs shall go with one Democrat because they cannot in conscience vote for a Whig." He was "well satisfied with Trumbull yet his five particular friends who would rather see the Country go to the Devil than vote for a whig are not at all to my taste[.] I have made up my mind that henceforth I can be as reckless as they

³⁸⁴ David Davis to Julius Rockwell, Bloomington, Illinois, 4 March 1855, Rockwell Papers, Lenox Public Library, Lenox, Massachusetts.

³⁸⁵ Illinois State Register, n.d., copied in the Ottawa Free Trader, 17 February 1855; Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 13 February 1855.

³⁸⁶ Abraham Smith to Lincoln, Ridge Farm, Illinois, 31 May 1858, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

are.”³⁸⁷ James Matheny denounced the Democrats who had refused to support Lincoln and called Trumbull “mean, low lived, [and] sneaking.”³⁸⁸

Especially indignant was Mary Lincoln, who denounced Trumbull’s “cold, selfish treachery.” She turned on Mrs. Trumbull (her old friend and bridesmaid Julia Jayne), calling her “ungainly,” “cold,” “unsympathizing,” and “unpopular.”³⁸⁹ Shortly after the election, she snubbed Julia Trumbull as the two women emerged from a church service; when Mrs. Trumbull tried to catch her eye, Mary Lincoln looked away. Julia persuaded her mother to invite Mrs. Lincoln to a party, but the invitation was declined. When the two politicians’ wives met by chance, Mary Lincoln was singularly ungracious. Julia reported that “I have shaken hands with Mary, her lips moved but her voice was not audible[.] I think she was embarrassed.”³⁹⁰ During the 1860 campaign, politicians eager to smooth relations between Lincoln and Trumbull enlisted Mrs. Norman B. Judd’s aid in an attempt to heal the breach. At Springfield, Mrs. Judd found neither Mary Lincoln nor Julia Trumbull willing to take the first step; eventually, after much cajolery, Mrs. Trumbull consented. But as she prepared to call on her former friend, she balked when Adeline Judd innocently observed, “You are doing a great service to the cause & the country by this act.” Flinging down her bonnet, Julia Trumbull declared that she would not be reconciled simply for political reasons. Undaunted, Mrs. Judd then turned to Mary Lincoln, who

³⁸⁷ Gillespie to Lincoln, Edwardsville, 6 June 1856, Herndon-Weik Papers, Library of Congress. Gillespie’s anger at Trumbull’s supporters did not abate with time. See Gillespie to [M. D. Hardin], Edwardsville, 22 April 1880, Hardin Family Papers, Chicago History Museum.

³⁸⁸ Speech of James Matheny in the fall of 1856, Chicago Weekly Times, 1 July 1858.

³⁸⁹ Jean Baker, Mary Todd Lincoln: A Biography (New York: W. W. Norton, 1987), 150; Mary Lincoln to Leonard Swett, n.p., 12 January [1867], in Turner and Turner, eds. Mary Todd Lincoln, 406; Anson G. Henry to his wife, [Washington], [18?] February 1863, in Charles B. Strozier, Lincoln’s Quest for Union: Public and Private Meanings (New York: Basic Books, 1982), 76.

³⁹⁰ Julia Jayne Trumbull to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 14 April and 5 May 1856, Trumbull Family Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

in time agreed to invite Mrs. Trumbull for a ride. At the Trumbull home, Mary Lincoln refused to accompany Adeline Judd to the door.

“Why didn’t Mrs. Lincoln come in?” asked a miffed Julia Trumbull.

“I told her not to,” replied Mrs. Judd. “I thought it was better.”

Despite this inauspicious start, the two former enemies spoke as they passed by the courthouse, where Lincoln, Trumbull, Judd, and others observed them. Judd blanched as one of the men whispered, “How did she do it?”³⁹¹

The rapprochement was short-lived, for relatives and politicians soon persuaded Mary Lincoln that the peace overture had been part of a plot to make former Democrats dominate erstwhile Whigs in the Republican coalition. When invited to a party at the Trumbulls’ home, Mrs. Lincoln developed a convenient headache.

Judd recalled that “Lincoln never joined in that clamor” against the five anti-Nebraska Democrats who refused to vote for him. “He had the good sense to see that our course was the result of political sagacity,” Judd explained. “If we had voted for him, we should simply have been denounced by our own papers as renegades who had deserted the democrats and gone over to the Whigs.” But as events unfolded, “that charge couldn’t be maintained a moment against us.” To the contrary, “we could maintain our entire consistency as anti-Nebraska Democrats, and

³⁹¹ Mrs. Norman B. Judd, undated interview with Ida Tarbell, *Ida M. Tarbell Papers*, Allegheny College. On February 13, 1861, Mrs. Judd reported that her husband had recently visited Springfield and found Mary Lincoln “much more amiable than before.” Lincoln had asked Judd to accompany him on the train trip to Washington, and evidently the question arose as to whether Mrs. Judd should join the entourage. Mary Lincoln apparently objected. Mrs. Judd remarked to Francis P. Blair, Sr.: “One thing is very certain. My affection for Mrs Trumbull could never hold itself in abeyance to please the Lady [Mary Lincoln] under whose ‘auspices’ you would like to see me acting.” Mrs. Norman B. Judd to Francis P. Blair, Sr., Chicago, 13 February 1861, Blair and Lee Family Papers, Princeton University. A son of Mrs. Judd was known to make unfavorable remarks about Mrs. Lincoln based “on stories told him by his father.” King Dykeman to W. E. Barton, Seattle, 11 December 1923, William E. Barton Papers, University of Chicago.

that enabled us to carry over a fraction of the Democratic party sufficiently large to give us control of the State.”³⁹²

Some of Lincoln’s admirers reconciled themselves to his defeat after observing Trumbull attack Douglas in the senate. In 1857, John H. Bryant of Princeton, brother of the poet and antislavery leader William Cullen Bryant, told Trumbull: “I often hear it said, that the Legislature when they elected you, did the best thing they could have done, that you had met your adversary [Douglas] . . . with more adroitness and skill, than probably any other man could have done. For Mr Lincoln I know the people have great respect, and great confidence in his ability and integrity. Still the feeling here is, that you have filled the place, at this particular time, better than he could have done.”³⁹³

Disappointing though his defeat was to both him and his spouse, Lincoln could derive satisfaction for having laid the foundation for the Illinois Republican party, which would mature into a full-blown organization by 1856.³⁹⁴ He later said Trumbull’s election “tended strong” to cement the anti-Nebraska Democrats in the Republican coalition.³⁹⁵ He might also have taken heart from the pledge made by John M. Palmer that he and his Democratic friends would “stand by him in the next fight . . . against Douglas.”³⁹⁶ Lincoln’s reaction to his loss illustrated the truth of Richard J. Oglesby’s observation that “he submitted to adversity and injustice with as much real patience as any Man I Ever knew – because he had an abiding belief that all would yet come

³⁹² Norman B. Judd interviewed by John G. Nicolay, Washington, 28 February 1876, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 45-46.

³⁹³ John H. Bryant to Lyman Trumbull, Princeton, Illinois, 12 February 1857, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

³⁹⁴ Matthew Pinsker, “Senator Abraham Lincoln” Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association 14 (1993): 1-21.

³⁹⁵ Lincoln to George W. Dole, Gurdon S. Hubbard, and William H. Brown, Springfield, 14 December 1859, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 3:507-8.

³⁹⁶ Washington correspondence, 30 September [1892?], Chicago Evening Post, undated clipping in the Lincoln Collection, Vertical File, “Reminiscences,” folder 3, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

out right or that the right would appear and Justice finally be awarded to him.”³⁹⁷ And so it would.

³⁹⁷ Oglesby to Herndon, Springfield, 5 January 1866, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 153.