

## Chapter Eighteen

“What If I Appoint Cameron, Whose Very Name  
Stinks in the Nostrils of the People for His Corruption?”:  
Cabinet-Making in Springfield (1860-1861)

As he struggled with the thorny problem of secession, Lincoln faced a related challenge: selecting a cabinet. Should he take Southerners who had not voted for him? Many conciliators urged Lincoln to appoint such men to his cabinet.<sup>1</sup> He was not averse, telling Herndon “that he wanted to give the South, by way of placation, a place in his cabinet; that a fair division of the country entitled the southern states to a reasonable representation there.”<sup>2</sup> But who? Among the Republicans, should he select only ex-Whigs or form a coalition government including ex-Democrats? Should he favor the Conservatives, the Moderates, or the Radicals? The day after the election, he had tentatively chosen a cabinet, but six weeks later he complained that “the making of a

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<sup>1</sup> Among those recommended were men from the Border States (like Edward Bates of Missouri; William L. Marshall, Reverdy Johnson, Henry Winter Davis, and Montgomery Blair of Maryland; and James Guthrie, Joseph Holt, Robert Anderson, Green Adams, Charles S. Morehead, and Cassius M. Clay of Kentucky); from the Upper South (like George W. Summers, William L. Goggin, John Minor Botts, Robert E. Scott, Alfred Caldwell, John C. Underwood, and William C. Rives of Virginia; John A. Gilmer, Kenneth Rayner, and William A. Graham of North Carolina; and John Bell, Andrew Johnson, Emerson Etheridge, Meredith P. Gentry, Thomas A. R. Nelson, and William A. Wisener of Tennessee); and even from the Deep South (like Alexander H. Stephens, Herschel V. Johnson, and John P. King of Georgia; Sam Houston of Texas; Randall Hunt of Louisiana; and William L. Sharkey of Mississippi). These men were recommended in letters Lincoln received between November 1860 and March 1861. Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. See also W. W. Gitt to William P. Fessenden, Rockville, Indiana, 17 February 1861, Fessenden Papers, Library of Congress; Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, [St. Louis, 25 January 1861], Blair Family Papers, Library of Congress. Not all Republicans favored such an approach. See “Cabinet Making – Absurdity of Current Rumors,” Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 3 December 1860.

<sup>2</sup> William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, Herndon's Life of Lincoln: The History and Personal Recollections of Abraham Lincoln (1889; New York: Da Capo Press, 1983), 382.

cabinet, now that he had it to do, was by no means as easy as he had supposed.” He believed “that while the population of the country had immensely increased, really great men were scarcer than they used to be.”<sup>3</sup> Throughout the long weeks from the election until his departure from Springfield in February, Lincoln was besieged with callers giving advice about cabinet selections. As one visitor observed, “he is troubled” for “every name he mentions in connection with [the] Cabinet brings to Springfield an army of Patriotic Individuals protesting against this or that man[’]s appointment.”<sup>4</sup> To his old friend, Illinois attorney Joseph Gillespie, Lincoln expressed the desire to “take all you lawyers down there with me, Democrats and Republicans alike, and make a Cabinet out of you. I believe I could construct one that would save the country, for then I would know every man and where he would fit. I tell you, there are some Illinois Democrats, whom I know well, that I would rather trust than a Republican I would have to learn, for I’ll have no time to study the lesson.”<sup>5</sup>

Many executives fear to surround themselves with strong-willed subordinates who might overshadow them, but Lincoln did not. When advised against appointing Salmon P. Chase to a cabinet post because the Ohioan regarded himself as “a great deal bigger” than the president-elect, Lincoln asked: “Well, do you know of any other men who think they are bigger than I am? I want to put them all in my cabinet.”<sup>6</sup> In the cabinet

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<sup>3</sup> Gideon Welles, “Recollections in regard to the Formation of Mr Lincoln’s Cabinet,” undated manuscript, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Thurlow Weed Barnes, Life of Thurlow Weed including His Autobiography and a Memoir (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1884), 1:605-6.

<sup>4</sup> J. W. Shaffer to Elihu B. Washburne, Freeport, Illinois, 29 January 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>5</sup> “Lincoln’s Time of Agony,” reminiscences of Joseph Gillespie, Springfield correspondence, 2 February, New York Tribune, 5 February 1888. This conversation allegedly took place on 1 January 1861. This reminiscence seems to be supported by a letter by James C. Conkling to his son, written that day.

<sup>6</sup> John W. Bunn to Isaac N. Phillips, Springfield, 8 November 1910, in Isaac N. Phillips, Abraham Lincoln by Some Men Who Knew Him, ed. Paul M. Angle (1910; Chicago: Americana House, 1950), 114-15.

he included every major competitor at the Chicago Convention, a decision that required unusual self-confidence, a quality misunderstood by some, including his assistant personal secretary, John Hay. Deeming modesty “the most fatal and most unsympathetic of vices” and the “bane of genius, the chain-and-ball of enterprise,” Hay argued that it was “absurd to call him a modest man.”<sup>7</sup> In fact, Hay was projecting onto his boss his own immodesty. Lincoln was both remarkably modest and self-confident. He did not need to be surrounded by sycophants dependent on him for political preferment; instead he chose men with strong personalities, large egos, and politically significant followings whose support was necessary for the administration’s success.<sup>8</sup>

Seward’s stature as a leading exponent of Republican principles virtually guaranteed that he would be named secretary of state. Lincoln offered that post to the *New Yorker* on December 8 after some elaborate preliminary maneuvering. Weed attempted to inveigle the president-elect into calling on the senator at Auburn, just as William Henry Harrison before his inauguration in 1841 had conferred with Henry Clay at the latter’s Kentucky estate. When Lincoln refused to follow Harrison’s example, Lord Thurlow tried to persuade him to meet with Seward in Chicago; that proposal was also rejected.<sup>9</sup>

One reason for Lincoln’s reluctance to meet in the Windy City was probably his desire to avoid a repetition of the disagreeable experiences he had had there in late

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<sup>7</sup> Hay to John G. Nicolay, Warsaw, Illinois, 22 November 1872; Hay to Charles Hay, Paris, 9 September 1866, letterpress copy, both in the Hay Papers, Brown University; Hay to William H. Herndon, Paris, 5 September 1866, in , Michael Burlingame, ed., At Lincoln’s Side: John Hay’s Civil War Correspondence and Selected Writings (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 110.

<sup>8</sup> On Lincoln and his cabinet, see Doris Kearns Goodwin, Team of Rivals: The Political Genius of Abraham Lincoln (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2005), and Burton J. Hendrick, Lincoln’s War Cabinet (Boston: Little, Brown, 1946).

<sup>9</sup> Gideon Welles, “Recollections in regard to the Formation of Mr Lincoln’s Cabinet,” undated manuscript, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

November while conferring with Hannibal Hamlin about cabinet appointments. Then the “aristocratic noodles of the Michigan avenue” had ridiculed “the plain republican habits of the President and his lady.”<sup>10</sup> Back in Springfield, he complained about the social whirl he had endured in the metropolis; Henry Villard reported that his “sketch of the dinner and other parties, and the Sunday school meetings he had to attend – of the crowds of [the] curious that importuned him at all hours of the day, of the public levees he was obliged to hold, &c., &c., was graphic. It seems that instead of enjoying rest and relief, as expected, he was even more molested than in this place. If people only knew his holy horror of public ovations, they would probably treat him more sparingly. To be lugged around from place to place to satisfy the curiosity of the populace, is a doubtful mode of bestowing honor and rendering homage, &c. Mr. Lincoln’s experience at Chicago in this respect will probably deter him for undertaking another journey previous to his final departure for Washington City.”<sup>11</sup>

When the eminent Presbyterian pastor Theodore L. Cuyler called on Lincoln at his Chicago hotel, he enjoyed a hospitable reception. “His manner is exceedingly genial,” Cuyler wrote. “He grasped my hand warmly – put me at ease by a cordial recognition.”<sup>12</sup> In Chicago, amid all the distractions (including office-seekers who “clung to him like burs”), Lincoln managed to accomplish his primary goal of launching the cabinet search in consultation with Hamlin, who had earlier met with Weed. Then Lord Thurlow had argued that Seward deserved the state department portfolio but predicted that he would

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<sup>10</sup> Chicago correspondence, 25 November, New York Herald, 26 November 1860.

<sup>11</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 28 November, New York Herald, 2 December 1860; Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 28 November, Cincinnati Commercial, 1 December 1860.

<sup>12</sup> T. L. Cuyler to the editor of the Evangelist, n.d., copied in the Ohio State Journal (Columbus), 20 December 1860.

decline it.<sup>13</sup> To find out if this were true, Lincoln instructed Hamlin to divine Seward's intentions. (At Lincoln's request, Hamlin burned the letters he received from the president-elect about this project.)<sup>14</sup> The president-elect wanted to appoint the New Yorker because of "his ability, his integrity, and his commanding influence, and fitness for the place." He also considered it "a matter of duty to the party, and to Mr. Seward[']s many and strong friends, while at the same time it accorded perfectly with his own personal inclinations – notwithstanding some opposition on the part of sincere and warm friends."<sup>15</sup> Seward did indeed enjoy great prestige, not only among Republicans but also among Northern Democrats like New York attorney Edwards Pierrepont. He told William M. Evarts that there was "no man of sense in the Democratic Party who does not think that Seward at the head of the Cabinet will give your party more strength, both north & south, than any other man in the nation. There is but one opinion upon this matter."<sup>16</sup> But opposition to Seward was strong, especially among the Barnburners (ex-Democrats in New York who were more vehemently opposed to slavery than most ex-Whigs). When Trumbull reported that many anti-corruption leaders in New York objected to the Sage of Auburn, Lincoln replied that he regretted "exceedingly the anxiety of our friends in New-York," but it seemed that "the sentiment in that state which

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<sup>13</sup> Howard K. Beale and Alan W. Brownsword, eds., Diary of Gideon Welles, Secretary of the Navy under Lincoln and Johnson (3 vols.; New York: W.W. Norton, 1960), 2:387-92 (3 December 1865). George G. Fogg told this to Welles.

<sup>14</sup> Hamlin to John G. Nicolay, Bangor, July 1888, Nicolay Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>15</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 26 November, Cincinnati Commercial, n.d., copied in the Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 4 December 1860; John G. Nicolay, memorandum of a conversation between Lincoln and Edward Bates, 15 December 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), 18. See also Gideon Welles, "Recollections in regard to the Formation of Mr Lincoln's Cabinet," undated manuscript, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

<sup>16</sup> Pierrepont to Evarts, 5 January 1861, in John M. Taylor, William Henry Seward: Lincoln's Right Hand (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 139.

sent a united delegation to Chicago in favor of Gov. S[eward] ought not, and must not be snubbed, as it would be by the omission to offer Gov. S. a place in the cabinet. I will, myself, take care of the question of ‘corrupt jobs’ and see that justice is done to all.”<sup>17</sup>

At Washington in early December, Hamlin met with Seward’s fellow New York senator, Preston King, and sounded him out concerning his colleague; after some preliminary inquiries, King told Hamlin to approach Seward directly.<sup>18</sup> In response, Hamlin wrote Lincoln asking instructions. On December 8, Lincoln sent his running mate two letters to deliver to Seward, one a brief, formal offer of the state department portfolio, the other a longer, more personal appeal. The Maine senator did so, after consulting with Trumbull. Seward began the interview protesting, perhaps sincerely, that “he was tired of public life,” that he “intended to resign his seat or decline a reelection and retire,” and that “there was no place in the gift of the President which he would be willing to take.” Hamlin then presented the letters offering him the state department post. In them, Lincoln tactfully stated that “[r]umors have got into the newspapers to the effect that the [State] Department . . . would be tendered you, as a compliment, and with the expectation that you would decline it. I beg you to be assured that I have said nothing to justify these rumors. On the contrary, it has been my purpose, from the day of the nomination at Chicago, to assign you, by your leave, this place in the administration. I have delayed so long to communicate that purpose, in deference to what appeared to me to be a proper caution in the case. Nothing has been developed to change my view in the premises; and I now offer you the place, in the hope that you will accept it, and with the

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<sup>17</sup> Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 2 December 1860, draft, Lincoln Collection, Chicago History Museum; Lincoln to Trumbull, Springfield, 8 December 1860, Roy P. Basler et al., eds., Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln (8 vols. plus index; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1953-55), 4:149.

<sup>18</sup> King told this to John Bigelow. Bigelow diary, 8 May 1861, New York Public Library.

belief that your position in the public eye, your integrity, ability, learning, and great experience, all combine to render it an appointment pre-eminently fit to be made.”<sup>19</sup> The president-elect’s letter seems to have reflected his true feelings.<sup>20</sup>

Seward, whose extensive travels abroad and service on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee prepared him well for the job, responded cautiously: “This is remarkable, Mr. Hamlin. I will consider the matter, and, in accordance with Mr. Lincoln’s request give him my answer at the earliest practicable moment.”<sup>21</sup> Seward delayed responding in the hopes that Weed’s late-December mission to Springfield might succeed. (Hamlin felt sure that the Sage of Auburn would accept.)<sup>22</sup>

Having failed to win Lincoln’s backing for the Crittenden Compromise, Seward pinned his hopes on persuading him to appoint conciliators rather than stiff-backs to the cabinet. Like Seward, Weed believed that if the tariff were reduced and if patronage were given to Southern Unionists promptly, a Union party would emerge in the Upper South which would whip the secessionists within two years.<sup>23</sup> Weed recalled that at their December 20 meeting, Lincoln told him “that he supposed I had some experience in cabinet-making; that he had a job on hand, and as he had never learned that trade, he was

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<sup>19</sup> Lincoln to Seward, Springfield, 8 December 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:148.

<sup>20</sup> Frederic Bancroft, The Life of William H. Seward (2 vols.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1900), 2:38-39; Glyndon Van Deusen, William Henry Seward (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 240. For the view that Lincoln was insincere in offering Seward the state department portfolio, see William E. Baringer, A House Dividing: Lincoln as President Elect (Springfield: Abraham Lincoln Association, 1945), 99-104; Washington correspondence, 6 March, New York Herald, 9 March 1861.

<sup>21</sup> Howard Carroll, Twelve Americans: Their Lives and Times (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883), 154. On December 13, the New Yorker asked Lincoln for time to think it over. H. Draper Hunt, Hannibal Hamlin of Maine: Lincoln’s First Vice-President (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 131; Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:338-39 (entry for December 1865); Lincoln to Seward, Springfield, 8 December 1860, two letters, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:148-49; Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 28 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>22</sup> Hamlin to Lyman Trumbull, Hampden, Maine, 27 December 1860, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>23</sup> Weed told this to John Bigelow. Bigelow diary, 27 March 1861 New York Public Library.

disposed to avail himself of the suggestions of friends.” Weed replied that he would be glad to help. Lincoln stated that “that he had, even before the result of the election was known, assuming the probability of success, fixed upon the two leading members of his cabinet,” namely Seward and Chase. The president-elect remarked that “aside from their long experience in public affairs, and their eminent fitness, they were prominently before the people and the convention as competitors for the presidency, each having higher claims than his own for the place which he was to occupy.”<sup>24</sup> Lincoln added that he would probably also name Gideon Welles, Simon Cameron, Montgomery Blair, and Norman B. Judd as their colleagues.<sup>25</sup> Weed strongly objected to the stiff-backed Montgomery Blair, arguing “that the Blair blood was troublesome, and traced evidence of this back to the father’s and Jackson’s time.” Lincoln “replied that he must have some one from the Border States, and Montgomery Blair seemed to possess more of this element than any other available person, because he lived in Maryland, and Frank, his brother, in Missouri.” Lord Thurlow suggested that if a Southerner were wanted, Henry Winter Davis of Baltimore or John A. Gilmer of North Carolina would be preferable to Blair. Weed also objected to Gideon Welles of Connecticut, prompting Lincoln to explain that he had authorized Hamlin to pick New England’s representative in the cabinet, and he recommended the Connecticut editor who had served effectively in the navy department under Polk. When discussing Simon Cameron, Weed was less free than he had been in speaking of the others. He had kind things to say about the Winnebago Chief

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<sup>24</sup> Weed, *Autobiography*, 605; Weed to the editor of the *New York Tribune*, 25 June 1878, *Chicago Tribune*, 8 July 1878. Lincoln told Samuel Hooper “that at the time of his nomination at Chicago Mr Chase was in his mind as the most suitable person for secretary of the Treasury.” Hooper to William P. Fessenden, Boston, 12 September 1864, Fessenden Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>25</sup> Seward told this to Charles Francis Adams. Charles Francis Adams diary, 27 December 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.



but thought him better suited for some cabinet post other than treasury secretary.<sup>26</sup>

When Weed recommended that at least two Southerners outside the Republican ranks be chosen, Lincoln “inquired whether . . . they could be trusted, adding that he did not quite like to hear Southern journals and Southern speakers insisting that there must be no ‘coercion;’ that while he had no disposition to coerce anybody, yet after he had taken an oath to execute the laws, he should not care to see them violated.” (Most Southerners interpreted as “coercion” any attempt to enforce the law, collect customs duties, retain control of Federal facilities, or retake facilities already seized.) Weed suggested that men from the Upper South be taken, prompting Lincoln to ask: “Would you rely on such men if their States should secede?” When Lord Thurlow replied affirmatively, Lincoln replied: “Well, let us have the names of your white crows, such ones as you think fit for the cabinet.” The Wizard of the Lobby proposed John Minor Botts, John A. Gilmer, and Henry Winter Davis. But, Lincoln wondered, what if he appointed Southerners whose states subsequently left the Union? Could “their men remain in the cabinet? Or, if they remained, of what use would they be to the government?”<sup>27</sup>

Those were good questions. Henry Winter Davis feared that if North Carolina seceded, Gilmer as a cabinet member would “be too timid to remain or to act.”<sup>28</sup> Had Lincoln appointed Gilmer, he would have been mightily embarrassed by that gentleman’s conduct when war finally came. On April 17, Gilmer wrote to Stephen A. Douglas: “may the God of battles crush to the earth and consign to eternal perdition, Mr. Lincoln, his cabinet and ‘aiders and abettors,’ in this cruel, needless, corrupt betrayal of the

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<sup>26</sup> Leonard Swett to the editor, Chicago, 13 July, Chicago Tribune, 14 July 1878.

<sup>27</sup> Weed to the editor of the New York Tribune, 25 June, Chicago Tribune, 8 July 1878.

<sup>28</sup> Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis Du Pont, [Washington], 20 February 1861, transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

conservative men of the South. We would have saved the country, but for the fatuity and cowardice of this infernal Administration . . . . I hope you will not aid or countenance so detestable a parvenue.”<sup>29</sup>

Though Weed left Springfield “with an extra large flea in his ear,” he praised Lincoln as “capable in the largest sense of the term. He has read much and thought much, of Government, ‘inwardly digesting’ its theory and principles. His mind is at once philosophical and practical. He sees all who go there, hears all they have to say, talks freely with everybody, reads whatever is written to him; but thinks and acts by himself and for himself. Our only regret is, that Mr. Lincoln could not have taken the helm of State, as successor to Mr. Buchanan, on the first Monday in December.”<sup>30</sup> Swett, who was present at the interview, remarked that Weed and the president-elect “‘took to each other’ from that very day they met, and their relations grew gradually more agreeable and friendly.”<sup>31</sup>

When Seward learned of this conversation, he was displeased, telling Charles Francis Adams that the ideologically diverse cabinet envisioned by Lincoln “was not such a cabinet as he had hoped to see, and it placed him in great embarrassment what to do. If he declined [to serve in the cabinet], could he assign the true reason for it, which

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<sup>29</sup> Gilmer to Douglas, n.p., 17 April 1861, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

<sup>30</sup> Herman Kreismann to E. B. Washburne, Washington, 27 December 1860, Washburne Papers Library of Congress; Albany Evening Journal, 24 December 1860. Weed further praised Lincoln: “an interview with Mr. Lincoln has confirmed and strengthened our confidence in his fitness for the high position he is to occupy; of his enlightened appreciation of the difficulties and dangers that surround us; of his desire that the Free States, if in anything delinquent, shall fulfill their constitutional duties; of his determination to require from all the States an enforcement of the laws and obedience to the Constitution; and, finally, of his earnest and inflexible devotion of the principles and sympathies of Republicanism.” New York correspondence, 25 December 1860, London Times, 8 January 1861.

<sup>31</sup> Leonard Swett to the editor, Chicago, 13 July, Chicago Tribune, 14 July 1878.

was the want of support in it?”<sup>32</sup> Disappointed by his failure to win Lincoln’s backing either of compromise or the appointment of a cabinet to his liking, Seward had to decide whether to reject the state department portfolio and champion Crittenden’s scheme and a conciliatory cabinet or to accept the cabinet post and find some other way to placate the South.<sup>33</sup>

On December 28, Seward chose the latter course, telling his wife grandiloquently: “I will try to save freedom and my country.” As this statement indicates, he had a massive savior complex, streaked with self-pity. In August 1861, he asserted that “there has not been a day since last January, that I could, safely for the Government, have been absent.” The following year he told Thurlow Weed, “I am doing all I am capable of doing to save our country” and wrote his daughter: “Some one has to exert an influence to prevent the war from running into social conflict; and battles being given up for indiscriminate butchery. I hope and trust that I may succeed in doing this.”<sup>34</sup> Four years later he insisted “that he had saved the country & nobody mentioned him while they went mad over Farragut & Grant!”<sup>35</sup>

When word of Seward’s appointment leaked out, Trumbull reported to Lincoln that it “is acquiesced in by all our friends. Some wish it was not so, but regard it rather as

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<sup>32</sup> Charles Francis Adams diary, 27 December 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>33</sup> Albert D. Kirwan, John J. Crittenden: The Struggle for the Union (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1962), 381-82.

<sup>34</sup> Seward to his wife, [Washington], 28 December 1860, 10 August 1861, and to his daughter, 21 August 1862, Seward, ed., Seward at Washington, 1:487, 610, 2:124; Seward to Weed, Washington, 22 January 1862, Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

<sup>35</sup> Seward told this to a New York Democrat. Henry Winter Davis to S. F. Du Pont, [Washington], 15 January 1865, transcript, Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum.

a necessity and are not disposed to complain.”<sup>36</sup> One who wished it was not so was George G. Fogg, who backed Chase for the state department post.<sup>37</sup> Fogg assured Lincoln that Seward “has not the nerve for the present crisis. He would bring a clamor with him at the outset, and would be a source of weakness in every emergency which required courage and action. He is a talker, and only that in quiet times.”<sup>38</sup> (After speaking with the president-elect, Fogg concluded that he “is anxious to do exactly right, and is likely to do so in the main,” but “lacks knowledge of men, and especially of politicians and place-hunters.”)<sup>39</sup>

For colleagues in the cabinet, Seward desired former Whigs who would support a policy of conciliation, not former Democrats like Judd, Welles, and Blair, who favored a hard line in dealing with secessionists. So the Sage of Auburn recommended to Lincoln the appointment of Randall Hunt of Louisiana, Robert E. Scott of Virginia, and either John A. Gilmer or Kenneth Rayner of North Carolina.<sup>40</sup>

Lincoln chose to approach the cheerful, likeable Gilmer, for he was the only one of those mentioned by Seward and Weed who currently held office and also lived south of the Border States. (Curiously, he evidently did not consider asking Andrew Johnson, though he told some Virginians who suggested the Tennessee senator for the cabinet, “I have no idea Mr. Johnson would accept such a position. His course is truly noble, but just

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<sup>36</sup> Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 20 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>37</sup> Fogg to Chase, New York, 7 November 1860, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>38</sup> Fogg to Lincoln, Washington, 13 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>39</sup> Fogg to E. D. Morgan, New York, 8 February 1861, Edwin D. Morgan Papers, New York State Library, Albany.

<sup>40</sup> Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 25 and 28 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

as is to be expected from a man possessing such a head as his.”<sup>41</sup> Gilmer, one of the few Southerners to vote against the Lecompton Constitution, had achieved some stature as the American Party’s gubernatorial candidate in 1856, the Southern Opposition’s nominee for speaker of the U.S. House in the winter of 1859-60, and the chairman of the House Committee on Elections. His only obvious drawback was his affiliation with nativism. “Our german friends might not be quite satisfied with his appointment,” Lincoln told Seward, “but I think we could appease them.”<sup>42</sup> So he invited Gilmer to Springfield, without revealing his purpose. “Such a visit would I apprehend not be useful to either of us, or the country,” Gilmer replied, not realizing that he was being considered for the cabinet.<sup>43</sup> Upon returning from North Carolina to Washington after the Christmas recess, Gilmer was accosted by Weed and Seward, who urged him to accept a cabinet appointment. The North Carolinian agreed to think it over.<sup>44</sup> (He eventually declined because, he told David Davis, of “Lincoln’s determination to appoint one gentleman to the Cabinet.” That gentleman was either Chase or Blair.<sup>45</sup> In addition, he probably feared the disapproval of his fellow Tarheels if he dared to associate himself with a Black Republican administration.)

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<sup>41</sup> J. Warren Bell to Andrew Johnson, Springfield, 16 February 1861, LeRoy P. Graf and Ralph W. Haskins, eds., The Papers of Andrew Johnson (16 vols.; Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1967-2000), 4:291.

<sup>42</sup> Lincoln to Seward, Springfield, 29 December 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:164.

<sup>43</sup> Gilmer to Lincoln, Greensboro, 19 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>44</sup> Gilmer to Thurlow Weed, Washington, 12 and 17 January 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester; Daniel W. Crofts, “A Reluctant Unionist: John A. Gilmer and Lincoln’s Cabinet,” Civil War History 24 (1978): 225-49. Henry Winter Davis claimed that he had inspired Seward to approach Gilmer. Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis du Pont, [Washington], [28 February or 1 March 1861], transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

<sup>45</sup> David Davis to Gideon Welles, Bloomington, Illinois, 27 July 1872, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis Du Pont, [Washington], [February or March 1861], transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

Meanwhile, Lincoln had been sounding out additional Southern leaders. He sent a feeler to another Tarheel, William A. Graham, who expressed no interest.<sup>46</sup> He also tried to recruit James Guthrie of Kentucky, who had been Franklin Pierce’s treasury secretary. Not wanting to approach the sixty-eight-year-old resident of Louisville directly, Lincoln asked Joshua Speed to confer with his fellow townsman. When Speed did so, Guthrie affirmed his strong Unionism but said: “I am old and don’t want the position.”<sup>47</sup>

Frustrated in these bids, Lincoln on December 12 published an unsigned query in the Illinois State Journal: “We see such frequent allusion to a supposed purpose on the part of Mr. Lincoln to call into his cabinet two or three Southern gentlemen, from the parties opposed to him politically, that we are prompted to ask a few questions.

“1st. Is it known that any such gentleman of character, would accept a place in the cabinet?

“2— If yea, on what terms? Does he surrender to Mr. Lincoln, or Mr. Lincoln to him, on the political difference between them? Or do they enter upon the administration in open opposition to each other?”<sup>48</sup>

The Journal also quoted an apposite passage from Lincoln’s “House Divided” speech of 1858: “Our cause, then, must be intrusted to, and conducted by, its own

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<sup>46</sup> W. A. Graham to Isaac Newton, Hillsborough, 8 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>47</sup> Joshua Speed, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon’s Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 475; Joshua Speed to Gideon Welles, Louisville, 8 August 1872, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

<sup>48</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:150. See also Lincoln to John D. Defrees, Springfield, 18 December 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:155, where he uses virtually the same language. One who advised Lincoln to take three non-Republican cabinet members from the South was Worthington G. Snethen. Snethen to Lincoln, Baltimore, 26 November 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. The New York Evening Post heartily approved of the skepticism implicit in these queries. “Pertinent Questions Put by Mr. Lincoln,” New York Evening Post, 14 December 1860.

undoubted friends.”<sup>49</sup> To Frank Blair, Lincoln stated that “he could hardly maintain his self respect” if he were to appoint a Southern opponent to his cabinet, asserting that “he considered such a course an admission that the Republican party was incapable of governing the country & would be a rebuke by him to those who had voted for him.”<sup>50</sup> He told Joshua Speed that he hesitated to name anyone to his cabinet from the Deep South for fear that “they might decline, with insulting letters still further inflaming the public mind.”<sup>51</sup>

Lincoln next turned to a Southern Republican two years younger than Guthrie, Edward Bates of Missouri, whom he described as “an excellent Christian Gentleman” and an unrivaled authority on the legal writings of Lord Coke.<sup>52</sup> At first, the president-elect intended to call on him at his St. Louis home, but when Bates learned of this plan, he insisted on visiting Springfield.<sup>53</sup> When the two men met there on December 15, Lincoln told his guest “that since the day of the Chicago nomination it had been his purpose, in case of success . . . to tender him one of the places in his cabinet.” He had delayed making the offer “to be enabled to act with caution, and in view of all the circumstances of the case.” Lincoln added that he did not wish to saddle Bates “with one of the drudgery offices,” but he could not name him to the premier cabinet post, secretary

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<sup>49</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 17 December 1860.

<sup>50</sup> Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, St. Louis, n.d. [15 December 1860], Blair Family Papers, Princeton University.

<sup>51</sup> Joshua Speed to Gideon Welles, Louisville, 8 August 1872, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

<sup>52</sup> Charles H. Ambler, Francis H. Pierpont, Union War Governor of Virginia and Father of West Virginia (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1937), 157. Lincoln allegedly told this to Pierpont in the fall of 1862.

<sup>53</sup> Howard K. Beale, ed., The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866 (Annual Report of the American Historical Association for 1930, vol. 4; Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1933), 164 (entry for 16 December 1860); Charles Gibson, typescript of an autobiography, p. 42, Gibson Papers, Missouri Historical Society.

of state, for that was earmarked for Seward. (If Seward turned it down, however, Bates might get that coveted post. Some believed that the Missourian would “be more likely to harmonize the conflicting elements than any other.”)<sup>54</sup> Therefore Lincoln “would offer him, what he supposed would be the most congenial, and for which he was certainly in every way qualified, viz: the Attorney Generalship.” Bates replied that he had declined a similar offer from Millard Fillmore in 1850, but now that the nation “was in trouble and danger,” he “felt it his duty to sacrifice his personal inclinations, and if he would, to contribute his labor and influence to the restoration of peace in, and the preservation of his country.” After expressing his pleasure, Lincoln asked Bates “to examine very thoroughly, and make himself familiar with the constitution and the laws relating to the question of secession, so as to be prepared to give a definite opinion upon the various aspects of the question.” In addition, he requested Bates to investigate the legality of southern attempts to censor the mails. He “feared some trouble from this question. It was well understood by intelligent men, that the perfect and unrestrained freedom of speech and the press which exists at the North, was practically incompatible with the existing institutions at the South, and he feared that Radical Republicans at the North might claim at the hands of the new Administration the enforcement of the right, and endeavor to make the mail the means of thrusting upon the South matter which even their conservative and well-meaning men might deem inimical and dangerous.” This was a curious statement, implying that Lincoln would approve censorship. Bates promised to look into the question. He condemned “the present practice, which permitted petty postmasters to examine and burn everything they pleased.” Yet “he foresaw the practical

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<sup>54</sup> Samuel Galloway to John Covode, Columbus, 22 December 1860, Covode Papers, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.



difficulty of enforcing the law at every cross-road.” Bates indicated that he was “inflexibly opposed to secession, and strongly in favor of maintaining the government by force if necessary.” He asserted that “he is a man of peace, and will defer fighting as long as possible; but that if forced to do so against his will, he has made it a rule never to fire blank cartridges.”<sup>55</sup>

Upon returning to St. Louis, Bates wrote Lincoln suggesting that his appointment be made public. Accordingly, Lincoln penned a brief statement for the Missouri Democrat announcing that Bates would be named to a cabinet post yet to be determined; it ran on December 21.<sup>56</sup> This news failed to placate those wishing to reassure the South, for Bates was too prominent an antislavery Republican and he came from a Border State.<sup>57</sup> Radical Republicans also objected to Bates’s conservatism. Calling him a “fossil of the Silurian era – red sandstone, at least,” Joseph Medill snorted that he “should never have been quarried out of the rocks in which he was imbedded.”<sup>58</sup>

Causing Lincoln even more difficulty than finding Southerners for his cabinet was his quest for a Pennsylvanian acceptable to the party. Since he had already named two of

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<sup>55</sup> John G. Nicolay, memorandum, 15 December 1860, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 17-19; Silas Noble to E. B. Washburne, Springfield, 17 December 1860, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress. Nicolay’s account differs from Bates’s shorter one in his diary, where he stated that Lincoln expected Seward to decline the state department post and that if that proved true, Bates would be given that portfolio. Lincoln told Frank Blair that “there was a contingency upon which Mr. Bates should have the offer of Secretary of State.” Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, St. Louis, n.d. [ca. 10 December 1860], Blair Family Papers, Princeton University. Chase claimed that Lincoln told him that if Seward turned down the State Department job, it would go to him. Chase to James Shepherd Pike, Columbus, 10 January 1860, Pike Papers, University of Maine. Cf. Chase to Charles A. Dana, Columbus, 10 November 1860, Dana Papers, Library of Congress. David Potter’s suggestion that Lincoln “showed a quality not far short of duplicity” seems unduly harsh. Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 154n.

<sup>56</sup> Bates to Lincoln, 18 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Lincoln to Bates, Springfield, 18 December 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:154; Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 21 December 1860.

<sup>57</sup> Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 154-55.

<sup>58</sup> Medill to Schuyler Colfax, ca. December 1862, in O. J. Hollister, Life of Schuyler Colfax (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1886), 200.

his rivals at Chicago (Seward and Bates), it seemed logical to pick Cameron. And that is what he did – and undid – and then did again.

Cameron's operatives went to work immediately after the election. Joseph Casey, accompanied by Pittsburgh newspaper editor Russell Errett, called on Lincoln. To Casey's surprise, the president seemed ignorant of the pledges made at Chicago. On November 27, he complained about it to Leonard Swett, who was exasperated by Lincoln's reluctance to appoint Cameron.<sup>59</sup> David Davis recommended that Casey and Errett solicit letters from leading Pennsylvania Republicans to bolster Cameron's chances.<sup>60</sup> They took his advice, and Lincoln received an avalanche of pro-Cameron mail.<sup>61</sup> In addition, Pennsylvanians traveled to Springfield to lobby on behalf of the Chief.

In late November, Lincoln conferred in Chicago with Hannibal Hamlin, a critic of Cameron. A month later, the vice president-elect told his running mate: "I do not believe one man can be found amongst all our friends in the Senate who will not say it will be ruinous to ap[poin]t Cameron– Whatever all the politicians in P[ennsylvania] may say, and I understand he has about all, my own opinion is clear it will not do, embarrassing as it may be some other man should be taken– It would be better to take no one from

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<sup>59</sup> Washington correspondence by Frank G. Carpenter, 22 January, Cleveland Leader, 23 January 1885. "From some things that occurred when I was at Springfield, my mind has since been in doubt, as to whether Mr. Lincoln has been made fully acquainted with the conversations and understandings had between you and Judge Davis on the one side, and myself, on the other, at the Tremont House, the night before the nomination." Casey said he had been compelled to reveal their agreement to Cameron's friends "to counteract other schemes, and overcome other inducements, proceeding from different quarters." Casey to Swett, Harrisburg, 27 November 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Russell Errett, "The Republican Nominating Conventions of 1856 and 1860," Magazine of Western History 10 (1889): 364-65.

<sup>59</sup> Casey to Swett, Harrisburg, 27 November 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>60</sup> Russell Errett to David Davis, Pittsburgh, 15 November 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Willard King, Lincoln's Manager, David Davis (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1960), 163.

<sup>61</sup> Elwin L. Page, "Cameron for Lincoln's Cabinet" (pamphlet; Boston: Boston University Press, 1954), 4-8.

P[ennsylvania], or some other man – [William M.] Meredith or Judge Reed [John M. Read].”<sup>62</sup> But the president-elect received few anti-Cameron letters, for the opponents of the Chief were complacent. As Alexander K. McClure recalled, “no one outside a small circle of Cameron’s friends, dreamed of Lincoln calling him to the Cabinet. Lincoln’s character for honesty was considered a complete guarantee against such a suicidal act.”<sup>63</sup> Lincoln prepared a summary of the correspondence on the subject, which heavily favored Cameron. He also composed a short, lawerly memorandum on allegations that Cameron had bought his Senate seat and had bribed members of a convention.<sup>64</sup>

On December 5, the president-elect summoned David Wilmot to discuss Pennsylvania appointments. The veteran antislavery champion, “an honest man, but not a man of much executive ability,” said that he would comply as soon as he could.<sup>65</sup> He added that “[m]y mind has rather inclined to Gen. Cameron as the man; but it cannot be concealed that he is very objectionable to a large portion of the Republicans of this State. In the main, his opponents are our most reliable men. Gen. Cameron however is a man of unquestioned ability in his way, and of great power as a politician in this State. He has tact and knowledge of men, and is very successful in dealing with them. It would hardly do to make an appointment very obnoxious to him. I have sometimes thought it might be as well in view of our quarrels to pass over our State in the Cabinet appointments.”<sup>66</sup> On

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<sup>62</sup> Hannibal Hamlin to Lincoln, Hampden, Maine, 27 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>63</sup> McClure to Ward Hill Lamon, Philadelphia, 8 May 1871, Jeremiah Black Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>64</sup> Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Lincoln*, 4:165-67.

<sup>65</sup> George G. Fogg to Gideon Welles, Concord, 30 December 1860, Welles Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>66</sup> David Wilmot to Lincoln, Towanda, Pennsylvania, 12 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

Christmas eve, Wilmot finally arrived in Springfield, where he had a long talk with the president-elect.<sup>67</sup>

Five days later, Cameron himself appeared in the Illinois capital. He had been urged by friends to visit Springfield but was too proud to do so on his own initiative. In December, Leonard Swett, while en route to Washington to serve as Lincoln's eyes and ears there and also to carry Illinois's electoral votes to be counted in the Capitol, stopped over in Harrisburg, where he invited Cameron to confer with Lincoln. It is not clear whether the president-elect had authorized Swett to do so, although Swett said he did.<sup>68</sup>

Joseph Medill heard from "the highest authority" that David Davis had urged Swett to invite Cameron to Springfield, and that "Swett accompanied by his delectable friend Charley Wilson, went out to Cameron's house and assured him that L. desired to see him at Springfield for the purpose of making him Sec of Treasury."<sup>69</sup> Months later, Lincoln complained that Davis had a "way of making a man do a thing whether he wants to or not."<sup>70</sup> George G. Fogg asserted that during "the summer and fall a bargain was struck between Weed and Cameron, with Seward to become secretary of state and the Winnebago Chief secretary of the treasury. Cameron went to Albany and then to Saratoga, where he spent several days with the intriguers," including Davis. "Cameron subsequently tried to get an invitation that fall to Springfield, but Lincoln would not give

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<sup>67</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 24 December, New York Herald 31 December 1860. Villard alleged that when Lincoln offered Wilmot a cabinet post, the Pennsylvanian said he would accept only if Cameron turned down such an offer. Springfield correspondence, (date obscured), Cincinnati Commercial, 3 January 1861.

<sup>68</sup> Swett to Cameron, Harrisburg, 28 December 1860, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress; Swett interviewed in an undated clipping, n.d., copying an article from the Boston Herald, datelined Chicago, 31 January, no year indicated, Swett Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>69</sup> Medill to Charles Henry Ray, Washington, 13 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>70</sup> Henry C. Whitney to Herndon, 23 June 1887, Wilson and Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants, 620.

it. This annoyed the clique. After the election, Swett . . . was sent, or came, East to feel the public pulse. . . . Swett was seized by Weed and Company, open rooms and liquors were furnished by the New York junto, and his intimacy with Lincoln was magnified. Cameron took him to his estate Lochiel and feasted him. Here the desire of Cameron to go to Springfield was made known to Swett, who took it upon himself to extend an invitation in Mr. Lincoln's name."<sup>71</sup> Elihu B. Washburne, who regarded Swett as a tool in the hands of Weed and Seward, wrote to Lincoln on January 7: "Great commotion and excitements exist to-day in our ranks in regard to a Compromise that is supposed to be hatching by the Weed-Seward dynasty. Weed is here and the great object now is to obtain your acquiescence in the scheme & sell out and degrade the republicans. Leonard Swett is the agent to be employed to get you into it. He is acting under the direction of Weed, and it is said writes a letter to you dictated by Weed."<sup>72</sup> In mid-January, Herman Kreismann reported from Washington that "Swett is still here but looks quite chopfallen. His Cameron intrigue has proved very disastrous." (Swett was convinced that Cameron would reject a cabinet post.) Kreismann asserted that "Lincoln ought to have a confidential and discreet man – not a damn fool like Swett – here to keep him posted and watch all the schemes and intrigues going on."<sup>73</sup> From the capital, Joseph Medill similarly complained about Swett, who he alleged "has been carrying rather too much sail

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<sup>71</sup> King, Davis, 154; Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:388-89 (entry for 3 December 1865); Gideon Welles, "Recollections in Regard to the Formation of Mr Lincoln's Cabinet," undated manuscript, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University. Welles said he heard this from George Fogg and from Lincoln himself. Also in attendance at Saratoga were some leading Republicans from Rhode Island and two from Pennsylvania.

<sup>72</sup> Elihu B. Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 7 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>73</sup> Kreismann to Charles H. Ray, Washington, 16 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Swett to Lyman Trumbull, Washington, 6 March 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

here – acting the part of envoy extraordinary and magnifying his status.”<sup>74</sup> Swett shared Weed’s view that “Lincoln’s whole theory of uniting the elements of our party by coupling in a cabinet rival chiefs is a very bad one.”<sup>75</sup>

Cameron, who privately held Lincoln in contempt, acted coy.<sup>76</sup> He later asserted that “I told Swett I didn’t want to go – and before I went I made Swett write it down what I was wanted for.”<sup>77</sup> On December 30, to the surprise of everyone in Springfield, Cameron, accompanied by his operative John P. Sanderson, arrived in the Prairie State capital.<sup>78</sup> There he had two long conversations with Lincoln, who expressed concern about which post to offer his visitor. If it were the treasury portfolio, which Cameron wanted, what should Salmon P. Chase receive? As a prominent Republican leader, the Ohioan’s claim to a high cabinet position could not be ignored.

Let him have the war department, said Cameron.

Would you accept that job? Lincoln asked.

“I am not seeking for any position, and I would not decline of course what I had recommended to another,” came the reply.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Medill to Charles H. Ray, Washington, 13 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>75</sup> Swett to David Davis, Washington, 1 January 1861, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>76</sup> George G. Fogg to Lincoln, Washington, 5 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>77</sup> Cameron, interview with John G. Nicolay, 20 February 1875, Michael Burlingame, ed., An Oral History of Abraham Lincoln: John G. Nicolay’s Interviews and Essays (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1996), 42.

<sup>78</sup> John Allison to Lincoln, New Brighton, Pennsylvania, 16 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 30 December 1860, New York Herald, 7 January 1861.

<sup>79</sup> Cameron, interview with John G. Nicolay, 20 February 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 42; memorandum of S. W. Crawford’s conversation with Cameron, Bedford Springs, Pennsylvania, July 1883, typescript, S. W. Crawford Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

“What about Seward?” asked Lincoln, who seemed to be uncertain whether the New Yorker would join the cabinet. The president-elect had told Bates that if Seward refused his offer, “that would excite bad feeling, and lead to a dangerous if not fatal rupture of the party.”<sup>80</sup> Cameron responded, “you needn’t hesitate on that score,” for the Sage of Auburn “will be sure to accept.”<sup>81</sup> (James Watson Webb believed that Seward had planned to turn down the offer and instead serve as minister to Great Britain, but that the secession of the Lower South led him to change his mind.)<sup>82</sup>

Afterward, as Cameron prepared to leave town, the president-elect handed him a letter: “I think fit to notify you now, that by your permission, I shall, at the proper time, nominate you to the U.S. Senate, for confirmation as Secretary of the Treasury, or as Secretary of War – which of the two, I have not yet definitely decided. Please answer at your own earliest convenience.”<sup>83</sup>

Cameron triumphantly shared this document with friends and leaked its contents to the press, causing E. B. Washburne to complain to Lincoln that the Pennsylvania boss “has acted the fool completely – showing round your letter offering the place to him to any body and every body as a child would show a toy.”<sup>84</sup> When the news arrived in

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<sup>80</sup> Beale, ed., Bates Diary, 164 (entry for 16 December 1860).

<sup>81</sup> Cameron, interview with John G. Nicolay, 20 February 1875, Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 42.

<sup>82</sup> Webb to Louise Benton (Mrs. J. C. Benton), n.p., [no month or day indicated], 1861, James Watson Webb Papers, Yale University.

<sup>83</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:168.

<sup>84</sup> Washington correspondence, 3, 7 January, Philadelphia Press, 4, 8 January 1861; Elihu B. Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 10 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; James Dixon to Mark Howard, Washington, 5 February 1861, Mark Howard Papers, Connecticut Historical Society; Francis P. Blair to Frank Blair, Silver

Spring, Maryland, 2 January 1861 [misdated 1860], Blair Family Papers, Library of Congress.

Washington, it “created great dissatisfaction.”<sup>85</sup> One senator was so upset that he actually wept.<sup>86</sup> The Chief’s enemies exploded in wrath, swamping Lincoln and his political friends with protests.<sup>87</sup>

Over the years, Cameron had alienated three Democratic presidents who had once been his friends. Andrew Jackson said he was “not to be trusted by any one in any way” and called him “a renegade politi[c]ian” and “a Bankrupt in politics . . . who got elected senator by selling himself to the whiggs.”<sup>88</sup> In his diary, James K. Polk referred to Cameron as “a managing, tricky man in whom no reliance is to be placed. He professes to be a Democrat, but he has his own personal and sinister purposes to effect.”<sup>89</sup> In 1850, James Buchanan, with whom Cameron had been close for two decades, called the Winnebago Chief a “scamp” and predicted that if “the base conduct of Cameron towards myself could be known throughout Pennsylvania, this would floor him.”<sup>90</sup>

Republican senators were indignant.<sup>91</sup> Kingsley Bingham of Michigan observed: “Lincoln don't want a thief in his cabinet, to have charge of the Treasury.”<sup>92</sup> Hamlin predicted “that Lincoln’s administration will be more odious than Buchanan’s if Abe

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<sup>85</sup> Trumbull to William Butler, Washington, 9 January 1861, Butler Papers, Chicago History Museum.

<sup>86</sup> James Dixon to Mark Howard and Cleveland, [n.d., filed December 1860], Mark Howard Papers, Connecticut Historical Society.

<sup>87</sup> According to one report, few of the protestors wrote to Lincoln directly, “preferring to make his Illinois friends the vehicles for carrying off their wrath.” Springfield correspondence, 8 January, Chicago Tribune, 10 January 1861.

<sup>88</sup> Jackson to Francis P. Blair, Hermitage, 7 and 9 April 1845, in John Spencer Bassett, ed., Correspondence of Andrew Jackson (7 vols.; Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1926-35), 6:395, 397.

<sup>89</sup> The Diary of James K. Polk during his Presidency, 1845-1849, ed. Milo Quaif (4 vols.; Chicago: A. C. McClurg, 1910), 1:426 (entry for 25 May 1846).

<sup>90</sup> Buchanan to Jefferson Davis, Wheatland, 16 March 1850, and to William R. King, Wheatland, 20 March 1850, John Bassett Moore, ed., The Works of James Buchanan, Comprising His Speeches, State Papers, and Private Correspondence (12 vols.; Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1908-11) 8: 373, 376.

<sup>91</sup> James Dixon to Gideon Welles, Washington, 8 January 1861, Welles Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>92</sup> Joseph Medill to Lincoln, Washington, 18 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.



goes on in the way he has set out” and urged that an “earnest expression should go to Lincoln from all hands.”<sup>93</sup> The other Maine senator, William Pitt Fessenden, told Lincoln: “I have been associated with him [Cameron] during this and the preceding Congress, on the Committee of Finance, and consider him utterly incompetent to discharge the duties of a Cabinet officer, in any position. Such is the opinion of other Senators in whom you would place confidence. My belief is . . . that there are not three members of the Senate, to whom the appointment referred to would not be a matter of deep regret.”<sup>94</sup> Trumbull, who predicted that Cameron’s appointment would “be fatal to the administration,” was “struck speechless with amazement” and “absolutely prostrated.” He informed the president-elect that “Cameron is very generally regarded as a trading unreliable politician,” that he “has not the confidence of our best men,” and that Pennsylvania congressmen “came rushing to me in regard to it greatly excited & declaring openly that it would be the ruin of the party in the state, & take away all the benefit which the party expected to gain by purifying the government.”<sup>95</sup> One of those Keystone State congressmen, surprised by the selection Cameron, speculated that Seward “must have counseled it.”<sup>96</sup>

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<sup>93</sup> Hamlin to William P. Fessenden, n.p., n.d., paraphrased in Joseph Medill to Horace White, Washington, 4 January 1861, and Elihu B. Washburne to Charles H. Ray, Washington, 2 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Hamlin to Lyman Trumbull, Hampden, Maine, 27 December 1860, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>94</sup> Fessenden to Lincoln, Washington, 20 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>95</sup> Trumbull to Norman B. Judd, Washington, 18 January 1861, Lincoln Collection, Brown University; F. P. Blair to Frank Blair, Silver Spring, 2 January 1861, Blair Family Papers, Library of Congress; Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 7 and 20 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Trumbull to David Dudley Field, Washington, 3 January 1861, copy, Trumbull Family Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>96</sup> John Covode to Samuel Galloway, Washington, 3 January 1861, Galloway Papers, Ohio Historical Society. Alluding to Cameron, Galloway had told Covode that the nation “in its present crisis does not need men of doubtful integrity and inferior talents.” Galloway to Covode, Columbus, 22 December 1860, Covode Papers, Historical Society of Western Pennsylvania.

A disgusted Joseph Medill exclaimed: “by God! we are sold to the Philistines.” Paraphrasing Stephen A. Douglas’s remarks about Buchanan, Medill expostulated: “We made Abe and by G— we can unmake him.”<sup>97</sup> He concluded that the president-elect “had fallen into the toils of the Weed gang, and has not the moral courage or firmness to rise superior to their meshes.”<sup>98</sup> Horace White threatened to bolt the Republican party if Cameron went into the cabinet. “I can stand a good deal of ‘pizen’ in a political way but I can’t stand that,” he declared. “The principle with which Cameron entered public life was to pocket everything that came within his reach, & he is too old a dog to learn new tricks.” White felt that he could “not belong to a party which places thieves in the charge of the most important public interests.”<sup>99</sup> (White later wrote, with much justice, that Cameron’s appointment was “the most colossal blunder of Lincoln’s public life.”)<sup>100</sup>

Bayard Taylor denounced Cameron as “a perfectly unscrupulous man” and predicted that “his appointment would give the new Administration an unfavorable prestige.”<sup>101</sup> John D. Defrees, who feared that it would “be fatal to us” if Lincoln chose men “whose appointment would be regarded by the public as a ‘license to steal,’” reported from Washington in mid-January that word of Cameron’s selection “is received here with astonishment and almost universal execration. The Democracy sneer at us and

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<sup>97</sup> Medill to Horace White, Washington, 4 January 1861, Charles H. Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Medill to Scripps and Ray, Washington, 6 January 1861, *ibid*.

<sup>98</sup> Medill to Charles H. Ray, Washington, 13 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>99</sup> Horace White to Charles H. Ray, n.p., n.d., Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; White to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 10 January 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; White to E. B. Washburne, Chicago, 5 January 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>100</sup> Jesse W. Weik, *The Real Lincoln: A Portrait*, ed. Michael Burlingame (1922; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 226.

<sup>101</sup> Bayard Taylor to Horace Greeley, Kennett Square, Pennsylvania, 10 November 1860, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library.

say ‘talk no more about honesty and fraud and corruption.’ His name is but another name for all that is dishonest. His venality is not dignified with brains. He is really a very small affair. Mr. Lincoln will be compelled to relieve himself of the blunder, else his administration will be odious at the start.”<sup>102</sup> New York reform Republicans – including William Cullen Bryant, Charles A. Dana, David Dudley Field, Henry B. Stanton, Hiram Barney, John A. C. Gray, Benjamin Welch, and William Curtis Noyes – indignantly denounced the appointment, saying that they felt like “victims of misplaced confidence,” “betrayed and sold out to the Forty thieves,” “taken in and done for.” In frustration they cursed the appointment, saying “D—n Illinois.”<sup>103</sup> On New Years Day, Elihu B. Washburne told the president-elect that the “report which has reached here this morning that Cameron is going into your cabinet, has created intense excitement and consternation among all of our friends here. I trust in God, it is not so. It is impossible to give reasons in this letter, but I am constrained to say, should the report prove true, it would do more than almost anything else to impair confidence in your administration. The best and strongest men in the Senate, & upon whom you must rely for support, are appalled at the apparent probability of the report being true. I speak what I know.— All say you must have greatest, the wisest, the purest men in your cabinet without regard to location – men whose very names challenge the confidence of the country.”<sup>104</sup> To Charles H. Ray, Washburne was even more emphatic: “Dismay reigns among our republican friends at the

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<sup>102</sup> John D. Defrees to David Davis, Indianapolis, 26 November 1860, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; John D. Defrees to Henry S. Lane, Washington, 18 January 1861, typed copy, Lane Papers, Indiana University.

<sup>103</sup> These men met in New York on January 3 and exchanged such views as these. Medill to Horace White, Washington, 4 January 1861, Charles H. Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. Medill’s source was Henry B. Stanton, who was present at that meeting. Thirty New York “anti-corruptionists” had met in November to plot strategy. Hiram Barney to Chase, New York, 26 November 1860, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

<sup>104</sup> Elihu B. Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 1 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

capitol.” Word of Cameron’s appointment “has literally appalled our best men and created a most painful impression that our victory has turned to ashes, and that Lincoln is a failure. Never have I seen men feel such indignation and chagrin as has attended this appointment.”<sup>105</sup>

Other congressmen agreed with Washburne. Among the indignant Representatives from the Keystone State was John P. Verree, who warned Lincoln that “the selection of Senator Cameron for any position in your cabinet will not only cause a feeling of deep disappointment here and throughout the state but will surround your administration with a quiet and undefined feeling of fear and suspicion of future investigations.”<sup>106</sup> Congressman Edward Joy Morris told the president-elect that “Cameron has but few superiors” as a “political intriguer,” for “he resorts to artifices, which men of a nicer sense of principle would spurn.” By promising “the same office to many different persons, he has troops of deluded followers who eventually become his implacable enemies from the deception practised on them.” Cameron “is famous for subsidizing newspaper correspondents, and working up a public opinion in his favor, which has no real existence. This he is doing now.”<sup>107</sup> Yet another Pennsylvania Representative, William D. Kelley, wrote Lincoln that there “is, whether well or ill founded, a general doubt of his [Cameron’s] integrity in political matters. I do not mean to imply that he has no pure or disinterested friends; but it is certain that the jobbing politicians are all for him whenever he enters the field. This appointment would taint your administration with suspicion, and would necessarily destroy our party in this state.

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<sup>105</sup> Medill to Horace White, Washington, 4 January 1861, and Washburne to Charles H. Ray, Washington, 2 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>106</sup> John P. Verree to Lincoln, Washington, 1 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>107</sup> Edward Joy Morris to Lincoln, Washington, 5 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

He has hosts of friends to reward, and he never forgets to punish those who have had the temerity to cross his path. Among his friends – a representative man – is he who kept the ‘side door’ in 1856 – while among those who are not willing to serve him to your detriment or that of our great cause are many of the most energetic, efficient & unselfish members of the party.”<sup>108</sup> Equally disenchanted lawmakers from the Keystone State included Galusha Grow, Thaddeus Stevens, John Covode, Chapin Hall, Benjamin F. Junkin, John Hickman, William Millward, and Robert McKnight. They and other leading Pennsylvania Republicans protested that Cameron’s appointment “will sow the seeds of discord demoralization and dissolution in the party in that State.”<sup>109</sup>

Discontent in Washington was matched by indignation in New York. On January 4, William Cullen Bryant protested to Lincoln that “Cameron has the reputation of being concerned in some of the worst intrigues of the democratic party a few years back. His name suggests to every honest Republican in this State no other than disgusting associations, and they will expect nothing from him when in office but repetition of such transactions. At present those who favor his appointment, in this State, are the men who last winter seduced our legislature into that shamefully corrupt course by which it was disgraced.”<sup>110</sup> James van Alen explained to Lincoln that Cameron’s “reputation as one of the most corrupt men of the old Democratic and the new Republican Party is so fixed, that to stamp your Cabinet with his name would be to start your Adm[istration] under obstacles which even your acknowledged purity of character could not remove.

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<sup>108</sup> William D. Kelley to Lincoln, Philadelphia, 7 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>109</sup> Medill to Horace White, Washington, 4 January 1861, Charles H. Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California; Thomas B. Webster, Jr., to John Sherman, Philadelphia, 2 January 1861, John Sherman Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>110</sup> William C. Bryant to Lincoln, New York, 3 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

Pennsylvanians, ambitious of his place in the Senate, or expectants of treasury pap, may advise you to such a step, but the honest & intelligent & disinterested members of our Party with whom the name of Simon Cameron is a synonym of corruption will stand aghast at such an app[ointment]t & will feel that they have already lost the long-coveted fruits of a victory for which they have fought so long, so faithfully, so patriotically. We feel, Mr Lincoln, that we have a right to look to you, to appeal to you to spare honest men this humiliation.”<sup>111</sup>

Alarmed by these complaints, Lincoln asked the economist and publisher Henry C. Carey of Philadelphia what Cameron had done to earn such an unsavory reputation. In reply, Carey offered nineteen reasons why the Chief should not be given a seat in the cabinet: “there exists throughout the state an almost universal belief that his fortune has been acquired by means that are forbidden to the man of honor and the gentleman; there stand on the records of our courts, and but a very few years old, charges that would if proved, involve the commission by him of serious crime; instead of promptly challenging the production of proof, all investigation was, as I have every reason to believe, prevented by repayment of the monies that had been improperly appropriated; to such errors of private life there has been added such a course of public life as has led most of our well disposed fellow citizens, to look upon him as the very incarnation of corruption; to the corruption of others, to an extent never, as I believe, exceeded in the Union he is well understood to have been indebted for his present position in the Senate; enormous as was the cost of that position, there exists a general impression that the investment has proved in a pecuniary point of view, a highly profitable one; his appointment would be a

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<sup>111</sup> James H. van Alen to Lincoln, New York, 5 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Cf. van Alen to Lyman Trumbull, [New York], 8 January 1861, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress, and van Alen to Greeley, St. Louis, 21 December 1860, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library.

signal to all the vultures of the Union to flock around the Treasury, in the hope of finding that the abuses of the present administration were to be repeated, and on an extended scale; to the promise of such participation in the public plunder he is believed now to owe the adhesion of many if not even the most of his present adherents; he is, therefore, the first choice of all the political gamblers of the state; his appointment could not fail to disgust the honest men who supported you in the hope of being relieved from the extortions of harpies like those who have, for the past eight years, lived upon the plunder of the public treasury; prompted by that purely selfish feeling which has so uniformly actuated him through life, his efforts throughout the whole of the last campaign, were systematically directed towards destroying the power of that State Committee to whose energetic action we could look alone, for the results so much desired; so successful had been his efforts in that direction that the Committee became at length unable to raise even a single dollar; and that I myself, most unwillingly, was then compelled to call together several gentlemen, and to unite with them in going from door to door, collecting the funds by help of which the triumph was obtained; the members of that Committee were, and are, unanimous in their reprobation of his conduct and that of the contributors to the fund, it may be doubted if there is even a single one who would not be shocked at his elevation to a place in your Cabinet; the man who spends his life in the manufacture of public opinion, for the promotion of his own private ends, whether in the form of telegraphic dispatches, newspaper editorials, or letters scattered broadcast to be signed and forwarded by apparently independent parties, thereby furnishes proof conclusive of his unfitness for the responsibilities of high public office; the shingling over of the whole state with promises of office on the one hand, and of lucrative contracts on the other, is

but a continuance of the system by which he has already to so great an extent demoralized this state; his appointment would utterly annihilate confidence in the honesty of the administration; it would, too, annihilate all hope that intelligence would preside over the operations of the Treasury – his whole senatorial career having fully justified the declaration of one of the most distinguished of Republican senators, that ‘in point of character he stood lowest in the Senate, and in that of intellect next to the lowest’ (That declaration was made in writing several years since, and is, as I believe, still extant); as I believe, his financial abilities are only those acquired in a long course of management of some of the most notorious little shaving shops in the state, of which he has been the founder, and is now a chief proprietor; and finally, his appointment would be followed by the entire demoralization of the party in this State – by defeat at the next election – and by the election of a democratic president in 1864.”<sup>112</sup>

When Alexander K. McClure heard of Cameron’s visit to Springfield, he fired off a protest to Lincoln stating that he, like most Pennsylvanians, “felt assured that your proverbial integrity of purpose precluded the possibility of his success. For this reason but few if any have remonstrated against his appointment. Altho' cognizant of all his efforts to compass his success by flattering the ambitious, intimidating the weak and exciting the cupidity of the corrupt, and making all either active or passive instruments to serve his purpose, I still never could realize that such a wrong upon our State and organization was to be apprehended. . . . In answer to your invitation Gen C left last evening to visit you, and I now fear that he may succeed by the silence of the great mass of the party. Perhaps I should have discharged this duty before; but having no personal

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<sup>112</sup> Henry C. Carey to Lincoln, Philadelphia, 7 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.



ends to attain – no ambition or prejudices to gratify, I felt great reluctance about obtruding my views upon you. And I felt especially delicate about doing so inasmuch as all the men from your State who were regarded as speaking for you, either designedly or through the designs of others here, never conferred beyond the small circle of Gen C's implicit followers. The movement to place Gen C in your Cabinet emanates from himself. He is its master spirit – its life & soul, & he personally directs it[.] I speak advisedly on this point[.] His most trusted friends have on various occasions proposed terms to me, directly from Gen C. himself, involving honors & emoluments, in consideration of which I was asked to join in the effort to make him one of your constitutional advisers. It is within my personal knowledge that the appointments within your gift, and contracts ad infinitum, to come from the different departments, have been offered from man to man, by Gen C in person & through his friends, to propitiate adverse influences & help to create such a sentiment in this State as would furnish an excuse for his appointment. I submit with all deference, in view of these facts, that if he should be called to your Cabinet it would be a source of the keenest mortification to many, very many of our best friends; and especially to those who look confidently to your administration to restore the government to purity & frugality. In short it would utterly demoralize both your administration and our party organization in this State, and would leave us politically without a future. You will bear me witness that I have not sought to prejudice Gen C, or any other man, in your estimation in any of my former letters; and my long silence in the face of the untiring efforts of Gen C to force himself into the Cabinet, may assure you how reluctant I am to yield to that duty now. But it is a truth to which we cannot close our eyes, that his association with your administration as one of

your confidential advisers would at once dispel the high hopes of our people in an honest & faithful government. I forbear to review Gen C's political career & his present status with the people of his State. But it is due to myself to say that, failing to wield the organization of the party for his own purposes in our last State Convention & at Chicago, he deliberately aimed at its overthrow and the defeat of our State ticket. He made a bold effort to subvert the State organization, and had Judge Davis, as I believe innocently, participating in it; and he only abandoned his factious movements when I called upon him & compelled him to choose between an open & faithful support of the ticket & open hostility to it. Had he failed to support Curtin faithfully, I should have exposed his treachery & driven him into the opposition ranks, as I was fully prepared to do so. He chose to do his duty, & from thence he labored earnestly for our success. His nomination for the Presidency in our State Convention was a sorry farce. When on the verge of being driven into a most humiliating declination in consequence of my own resolution which he was unable to defeat, he implored me to let him escape without absolute degradation. I did so, and after compelling him to nominate Curtin, whose defeat he had earnestly labored for, I became the author of the modified resolution by which he was given a most equivocal compliment to break his fall. This was a struggle in a Convention of his own State in which he had not a single competitor. Gen C is our Republican Senator, & his record there is blameless. He is entitled to respect, and his friends to a full participation, in the distribution of your favors. But to mark him as the Representative man of our organization and the confidential adviser of the President relative to Penna, would be a wrong upon us from which we could not recover. I would be glad to see Penna represented in your cabinet. But Cameron will not consent to any one who will not yield

to his supremacy. With eminent ability & experience in our ranks, the long rule of mediocrity has crippled our best men; and perhaps, under existing circumstances no one could be called into your Cabinet who would strengthen your administration in our State. Indeed I despair of an independent man being chosen cordially; and I would not ask that any one should be selected who is adverse to Gen C or his friends. But it is not at all essential that you should select a Cabinet officer from this State. Surely it is better to take none than to do us positive wrong. Our people are with you, and if you should send all the wrangling politicians overboard there would be little complaint; for it is a humiliating that Penna breeds politicians by swarms, but allows few to become statesmen. My humble judgment is, after mingling freely with all shades of preference that the selection of Hon Wm L Dayton as a representative of Penna & New Jersey, would be a judicious act. I do not more than know him personally; but he would be altogether acceptable to all in our State who have not special purposes to serve, & it matters little about them.”<sup>113</sup>

In response to this heartfelt plea, Lincoln invited McClure to Illinois for a consultation. There, on January 3, they met for four hours. McClure was disappointed with his first glimpse of the president-elect, who was “illy clad” and “ungraceful in movement.” As the visitor made his case, Lincoln listened patiently, asking occasional questions but exhibiting no humor. McClure felt as though he were making his appeal “to a sphinx.”<sup>114</sup> After presenting remonstrances from leaders like Governor Curtin, David Wilmot, Thaddeus Stevens, and others, McClure urged Lincoln to appoint either Wilmot or Stevens to his cabinet, but not “mere subjects of Cameron” like James Pollock or

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<sup>113</sup> McClure to Lincoln, Harrisburg, 29 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>114</sup> Alexander K. McClure, Our Presidents and How We Make Them (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1900), 178-79.

Andrew Reeder. “I put it squarely to Lincoln,” McClure reported, “why such an appointment could not be made. I told him also that if there were insuperable objections I was entitled to know them as he had appealed to me most earnestly to help him to reconcile matters in our State. He finally answered that Gen C. would not consent to any other appointment than himself in Penna. My answer was – that I considered that fact the strongest evidence that he was unfit for the trust in a political sense.” The president-elect told McClure “that to revoke C's appointment now” would disgrace the Chief, “hence his painful anxiety & hesitation.” At first, Lincoln was skeptical, for he had been told that McClure “was waging a personal war” on Cameron, but by the time he left, the visitor felt he had established credibility with the president-elect.<sup>115</sup> Lincoln assured his guest that he would reconsider the plan to appoint Cameron and inform McClure of his decision within twenty-four hours. He did so, asking for specific charges against the Chief along with proof to substantiate them. McClure said he would rather not play the role of “an individual prosecutor of Cameron.” The main objection to the Chief was not so much public corruption as “notorious incompetency.”<sup>116</sup>

But Lincoln did not wait for evidence. Stunned by the hostile reaction to Cameron, he regretted that his friends had earlier failed to inform him “more frankly & fully” about the Winnebago Chief.<sup>117</sup> (Without mentioning Cameron, Chase promptly urged Thaddeus Stevens to give Lincoln “that information which is indispensable to right conclusions.”)<sup>118</sup> But Joseph Medill averred that Lincoln had “consulted nobody – not

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<sup>115</sup> McClure to Thaddeus Stevens, Harrisburg, 10 January [1861], Stevens Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>116</sup> McClure to Ward Hill Lamon, Philadelphia, 8 May 1871, Jeremiah Black Papers, Library of Congress; Alexander K. McClure, Abraham Lincoln and Men of War-Times (4<sup>th</sup> ed.; Philadelphia: Times, 1892), 157.

<sup>117</sup> Chase to Lincoln, Columbus, 11 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>118</sup> Chase to Stevens, Columbus, 9 January 1861, letterpress copy, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

one original friend, not one honest man.”<sup>119</sup> The president-elect had alienated some senators by failing to ask their advice.<sup>120</sup> In late January, Seward complained that “Mr L has undertaken his Cabinet without consulting me. For the present I shall be content to leave the responsibility on his own broad shoulders.”<sup>121</sup>

On January 3, the president-elect wrote Cameron asking him to retract his acceptance of a cabinet post. “Since seeing you things have developed which make it impossible for me to take you into the cabinet. You will say this comes of an interview with McClure; and this is partly, but not wholly true. The more potent matter is wholly outside of Pennsylvania; and yet I am not at liberty to specify it. Enough that it appears to me to be sufficient. And now I suggest that you write me declining the appointment, in which case I do not object to its being known that it was tendered you. Better do this at once, before things so change, that you can not honorably decline, and I be compelled to openly recall the tender. No person living knows, or has an intimation that I write this letter. P.S. Telegraph, me instantly, on receipt of this, saying ‘All right.’”<sup>122</sup> (Many of Cameron’s critics wrote to Lincoln’s friends rather than to the president-elect himself.)<sup>123</sup>

Hurt and embarrassed, Cameron sent no such telegram or letter; he had resigned his senate seat and thus out of office. From Washington, Trumbull reported that “Cameron is behaving very badly about the tender of an appointment. It was very injudicious for him to be exhibiting your letter about as he did, & after the receipt of your

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<sup>119</sup> Medill to Horace White, Washington, 4 January 1861, Charles H. Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>120</sup> Herman Kreismann to Charles H. Ray, Washington, 20 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. See also Washington correspondence, 2 January, New York Tribune, 3 January 1861.

<sup>121</sup> Seward to Weed, Washington, 21 January 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

<sup>122</sup> Lincoln to Simon Cameron, Springfield, 3 January 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 170.

<sup>123</sup> “Intelligence from Springfield,” Chicago Tribune, 9 January 1861.

second letter he talked very badly – said to me that he would not then go into the cabinet, but that he would not decline by which I suppose he meant that he would embarrass you all he could, & he made a good many other remarks which I do not choose to repeat; but showing to me that he is wholly unfit for the place.”<sup>124</sup>

Lincoln scrambled to find a way to soothe Cameron’s wounded feelings. He felt that the treasury department portfolio could not be reoffered to the Chief, for that must go to Chase, whose “ability, firmness, and purity of character, produce the propriety.” Moreover, Chase’s appointment was necessary for political reasons because “he alone can reconcile Mr. Bryant, and his class, to the appointment of Gov. S[eward] to the State Department.” Chase’s selection, however, would not suit the Pennsylvania protectionists, who deplored the Ohioan’s free trade views. To placate the Keystone State, something must be done for Cameron. Perhaps he might be given the war department portfolio, which he would accept, but “then comes the fierce opposition to his having any Department, threatening even to send charges into the Senate to procure his rejection by that body.” (How Lincoln knew that Cameron would accept the war department portfolio is not clear. There is some evidence suggesting that the Chief wrote to the president-elect recommending Charles Francis Adams for the treasury department “and offering to take the War Department in lieu of the Treasury.”)<sup>125</sup> Perhaps Cameron could be returned to the senate. His recently chosen successor, David Wilmot, might be inveigled into stepping aside for Cameron if he were given “a respectable, and reasonably lucrative place abroad.” Patronage plums could be used to sweeten the deal: “let Gen. C’s friends

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<sup>124</sup> Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 20 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>125</sup> Seward told this to Charles Francis Adams. Charles Francis Adams diary, 3 January 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

be, with entire fairness, cared for in Pennsylvania, and elsewhere,” Lincoln told Trumbull.<sup>126</sup>

That compromise suggestion went nowhere. On January 6, Lincoln consulted with his old friends Gustave Koerner and Norman B. Judd. “I am in a quandary,” he told them. “Pennsylvania is entitled to a cabinet office. But whom shall I appoint?”

“Not Cameron,” they replied.

“But whom else?” he asked.

They suggested Reeder and Wilmot, but he responded: “Oh, they have no show. There has been delegation after delegation from Pennsylvania, hundreds of letters, and the cry is, ‘Cameron, Cameron!’ Besides, you know I have already fixed on Chase, Seward and Bates, my competitors at the convention. The Pennsylvania people say: ‘if you leave out Cameron you disgrace him.’ Is there not something in that?”

Koerner insisted that “Cameron cannot be trusted; he has the reputation of being a tricky and corrupt politician.”

“I know, I know,” said Lincoln, “but can I get along if that State should oppose my administration?” He “was much distressed.” Judd and Koerner presciently warned that he would have cause to regret Cameron’s appointment.<sup>127</sup>

Lincoln thought his old messmate from Mrs. Sprigg’s boarding house, James Pollock, might be an acceptable compromise candidate. Pollock had served as governor

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<sup>126</sup> Lincoln to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 7 January 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:171. For evidence of Pennsylvanians’ objections to the free trade views of Chase, see John W. Killinger to Lincoln, 15 January 1861; R. P. King to Lincoln, Philadelphia, 18 January 1861; William E. C. Coxe to Lincoln, Philadelphia, 28 January 1861, G. Rush Smith to Lincoln, Harrisburg, 10 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>127</sup> Thomas J. McCormack, ed., Memoirs of Gustave Koerner, 1809-1896 (2 vols.; Cedar Rapids, Iowa: Torch Press, 1909), 2:114. Koerner spoke with Lincoln several times about the cabinet and his Southern policy. Koerner to Lyman Trumbull, Belleville, 22 February 1861, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

of the Keystone State from 1855 to 1858. The Rev. Dr. William M. Reynolds, president of Illinois University, with whom Lincoln spoke about political developments, informed Pennsylvania Congressman Edward McPherson that the president-elect “is anxious to have a representative of Penn<sup>a</sup> in his Administration. But he is determined not to take part in a war of personal factions in Pa. The opposition to Mr. Cameron appears to be very bitter. Would Ex-Governor Pollock be acceptable to Pennsylvania generally?”<sup>128</sup> That suggestion produced no results. (Lincoln eventually appointed Pollock director of the Philadelphia mint.) Pollock informed Lincoln that “he should regard it as exceedingly disastrous to the Republican party of P[ennsylvani]a if Gen Cameron should not be appointed.”<sup>129</sup>

George G. Fogg berated Cameron roundly not only as corrupt and unprincipled, but also as stupid and dismissive of Lincoln. To the president-elect, Fogg declared bluntly: “Nearly every Republican Senator who has had the opportunity to know him, pronounces him intellectually incompetent for the proper discharge of the duties of a Cabinet officer. Besides, he has indulged in expressions of contempt for you personally, which should render his official connection with you an impossibility. No matter what communications have passed, you cannot, without sacrificing your own personal respect, and without losing, at the start, the confidence of all the honest men in the country, appoint him.”<sup>130</sup> Fogg’s friend, New Hampshire Congressman Mason Tappan, reported

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<sup>128</sup> Reynolds to McPherson, Springfield, 12 January 1861, McPherson Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>129</sup> Caleb B. Smith to David Davis, Washington, 5 February 1861, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>130</sup> Fogg to Lincoln, Washington, 5 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. See Elwin L. Page, “Harassed President-Elect: Lincoln’s Troubled Cabinet-Making As Shown in the Correspondence of George G. Fogg,” typescript, Fogg Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.



from Washington that Lincoln's announcement of cabinet choices "is creating heart-burning, and many of our folks here are particularly down on Cameron."<sup>131</sup>

The Chief's supporters and opponents continued to bombard the president-elect with affidavits, letters, and petitions. Five of McClure's fellow townsmen wrote Lincoln alleging that the editor was corrupt and unreliable.<sup>132</sup> John P. Sanderson returned to Springfield bearing the suggestion that Lincoln retract his abrupt January 3 letter to Cameron and replace it with a gentler missive. Eager to apply some salve to the wounds he had unintentionally inflicted on the Chief, Lincoln complied, writing Cameron thus: "When you were here about the last of December, I handed you a letter saying I should at the proper time, nominate you to the Senate for a place in the cabinet. It is due to you, and to truth, for me to say you were here by my invitation, and not upon any suggestion of your own. You have not, as yet, signified to me, whether you would accept the appointment; and, with much pain, I now say to you, that you will relieve me from great embarrassment by allowing me to recall the offer. This springs from an unexpected complication; and not from any change of my view as to the ability or faithfulness with which you would discharge the duties of the place." Lincoln assured Cameron that on January 3 he had written "under great anxiety" and had "intended no offense." The Chief should destroy or return that hurtful letter. Tactfully the president-elect added, "I say to you now I have not doubted that you would perform the duties of a Department ably and faithfully. Nor have I for a moment intended to ostracise your friends. If I should make a cabinet appointment for Penn. before I reach Washington, I will not do so without

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<sup>131</sup> Tappan to George Fogg, Washington, 5 January 1861, Tappan Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

<sup>132</sup> \_\_\_ Steinbach to Lincoln, [Chambersburg, Pa.], 12 January 1861, copy, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress.

consulting you, and giving all the weight to your views and wishes which I consistently can. This I have always intended.”<sup>133</sup>

In Springfield, Charles Henry Ray of the Chicago Press and Tribune lobbied against Cameron. He told E. B. Washburne that Lincoln “regrets what has passed and would gladly see an avenue of escape. But the poor man has been run down by Pennsylvania politicians, most of whom are candidates for the Senate, and each of whom hopes to squat in Cameron’s place. Among them Dave. Wilmot is conspicuous. He is the man who did it. Bah! They are all a set of cowardly tricksters, and seem to have combined to carry off spoils. But it is not too late. I have sent for Mr. Bryant and Geo. Opdyke, and if they will come out and tell him the truth, the bad thing may be defeated – to our loss in Pennsylvania, no doubt, but to Lincoln’s infinite credit in the nation.”<sup>134</sup>

In mid-January, responding to Ray’s appeal, Opdyke, Hiram Barney, and Judge John T. Hogeboom of New York visited Lincoln, who told them he had decided not to name any more cabinet members until he reached Washington. (Four days earlier he had written Seward, “I shall have trouble with every other Northern cabinet appointment – so much so that I shall have to defer them as long as possible, to avoid being teased to insanity to make changes.”)<sup>135</sup> Barney and his colleagues, who denounced Cameron and praised Chase, tried to dissuade Lincoln from appointing the Chief, but he would not budge. He wanted and expected to name Chase to head the treasury department, but he feared that appointment would offend Pennsylvania, and therefore he would wait until the

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<sup>133</sup> Lincoln to Cameron, Springfield, 13 January 1861, enclosing a letter backdated 3 January 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:174.

<sup>134</sup> Ray to Washburne, n.p., Thursday [ca. 10 January 1861], filed at the end of 1861, Elihu B. Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>135</sup> Lincoln to Seward, Springfield, 12 January 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:173.

situation in the Keystone State was settled. He thought Chase should be willing to let the matter stand “till he can be named without embarrassment; he was counting on Chase’s patriotism.”<sup>136</sup> These New Yorkers warned that if men like Weed, Cameron and Caleb B. Smith “got the reins, there is nothing left but a disgraceful compromise with the South, and afterward a reconstruction of the Radical Democratic party in all the free States; that the Administration thus manned cannot command the confidence of the country.”<sup>137</sup> (Privately Lincoln confided to Barney that he had offered Cameron the post of secretary of war and promised Henry Lane that he would appoint Caleb B. Smith secretary of the interior.)<sup>138</sup>

George G. Fogg wrote Lincoln a similar message: “if the policy of Seward & Cameron is allowed to prevail – if their utter abandonment of the principles of the Chicago platform shall receive even your tacit sanction, your administration will, at the start, be cut off from the sympathy and confidence of a large majority of the Republican members of the Senate, and from all the honest and earnest masses who believe in the principles for which they cast their votes.”<sup>139</sup>

To counter such pressure, pro-Cameron forces entrained for Illinois. Despite his “dread to appear unbidden, at Springfield,” Weed, at the urging of Seward, headed west to lobby on behalf of Cameron, but his train broke down and he returned to Albany. Stricken by illness, Leonard Swett was also unable to reach his home state to champion

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<sup>136</sup> Barney to William Cullen Bryant, Chicago, 17 January 1861, Bryant-Godwin Papers, New York Public Library.

<sup>137</sup> C. H. Ray to E. B. Washburne, Springfield, Illinois, 16 January 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; C. H. Ray to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, Illinois, 16 January [1861], Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>138</sup> Barney told this to an unidentified interviewer. Undated document in Allan Nevins, ed., “Hiram Barney and Lincoln: Three Unpublished Documents,” *Huntington Library Quarterly* 26 (1962): 4-5.

<sup>139</sup> Fogg to Lincoln, Washington, 2 February 1861, draft, Fogg Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

Cameron.<sup>140</sup> But Pennsylvania Congressman James K. Moorhead and Alexander Cummings, one of Cameron's operatives, were able to get through. On January 20, they were met in Springfield by David Davis, who was eager to have Cameron appointed. (Davis grew "quite huffy" at the delay in naming both the Winnebago Chief and Caleb B. Smith to cabinet posts.)<sup>141</sup> In an interview, Lincoln, according to Moorhead, "was very much opposed to appointing Cameron, and expressed himself very emphatically." The president-elect, insisting that he had won the election because of his reputation as Honest Old Abe, heatedly asked: "What will be thought now if the first thing I do is to appoint C[ameron], whose very name stinks in the nostrils of the people for his corruption?"<sup>142</sup>

That same day, Lyman Trumbull explained why Cameron had so many endorsers like Moorhead: "He is a great manager, & by his schemes has for the moment created an apparent public sentiment in Pa. in his favor. Many of the persons who are most strenuously urging his appointment are doubtless doing so in anticipation of a compensation. It is rather an ungracious matter to interfere to oppose his selection, & hence those who believe him unfit & unworthy of the place remain silent, & a public opinion is created at Springfield which is not real. Members of the Senate who know him intimately, & have sat on committees with him assure me he is wholly unfit for the Treasury Department. You may perhaps ask how if these things are true does he have so many friends & get such support in Pa. I am surprised at it, but the world is full of

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<sup>140</sup> Seward to Weed, Washington, 21 January 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester; Weed to Seward, Albany, 19 January 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester. Swett was laid up in Pittsburgh for days. On January 18, Seward had instructed Weed by telegram: "He goes at six tomorrow. You must go." Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

<sup>141</sup> William Jayne to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 2 February 1861, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>142</sup> J. K. Moorhead, interview with John G. Nicolay, Washington, 12 and 13 May 1880, Burlingame, ed., *Oral History of Lincoln*, 41. Cf. Lamon, *Lincoln*, 460.

examples of men succeeding for a time by intrigue & management. Report says that C. secured Wilmot in his favor by assurances of support for the Senate, & then secured Corwin by abandoning W. at the last. The men who make the charges against Cameron are not all, I am sure, either his personal enemies or governed by prejudice. Another very serious objection to C. is his connection with Gov. Seward. The Governor is a man who acts through others, & many believe that Cameron would be his instrument in the Cabinet. It is my decided conviction that C[ameron's] selection would be a great mistake, & it is a pity he was ever offered an appointment. I do not believe five Republican Senators would approve his having a place in the Cabinet, in fact I do not know that one would, though report has it that Gov. Seward is urging it. I do not mean by this, that Republican Senators would oppose the confirmation of Gen. C. should you send in his name. They would probably vote to confirm almost any man whom you should select, but I assure you that it would be with great reluctance that many would vote to confirm him.” Trumbull urged that Lincoln “put Chase into the Cabinet & leave Cameron out, even at the risk of a rupture with the latter; but I am satisfied he can be got along with. He is an exacting man, but in the end will put up with what he can get. He cannot get along in hostility to you, & when treated fairly as he ought to be will acquiesce.”<sup>143</sup>

When Lincoln asked Albert Gallatin Riddle about Cameron, the Ohio congressman answered that “he was a mystery, that his influence in Pennsylvania seemed out of all proportion to his ability, but that he was a wonderful manager.” Lincoln “replied that he had the same impression of him.”<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 20 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>144</sup> A. G. Riddle, Recollections of War Times: Reminiscences of Men and Events in Washington, 1860-1865 (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1895), 179.

On January 24, Lincoln told a group of pro-Cameron Philadelphians that he had devoted much thought to constructing a cabinet: “This subject has already engaged a large share of my attention, and I have every reason to hope that your wishes will be gratified. I feel a strong desire to do something for your big State, and I am determined she shall be satisfied, if I can do it. . . . Any man whom I may appoint to such a position [i.e., a cabinet post], must be, as far as possible, like Caesar’s wife, pure and above suspicion, of unblemished reputation, and undoubted integrity. I have already appointed Senator Seward and Mr. Bates, of Missouri, and they are men whose characters I think the breath of calumny cannot impeach. In regard to Gen. Cameron, I have received assurances without limit from gentlemen whose word is entitled to credit, that he is eminently fitted for the position which his friends desire him to fill, and that his appointment would give great satisfaction to Pennsylvania. I have a great desire to appoint Gen. Cameron, for the reason that he was formerly a Democrat, and I wish to give that element a fair representation in the distribution of the offices. Both Mr. Seward and Mr. Bates were formerly old line Whigs, and, for this reason, I feel a disposition to appoint Gen. Cameron. But on the other hand, there is a strong opposition to him; not from his own State, it is true, for the opposition to him there is so slight that it is scarcely worth mentioning. The feeling against him appears to come from Ohio, and one or two of the other Western States. His opponents charge him with corruption in obtaining contracts, and contend that if he is appointed he will use the patronage of his office for his own private gain. I have no knowledge of the acts charged against him, but I intend to make an investigation of the whole matter, by allowing his opponents to submit their proof, and I shall give him an opportunity of explaining any part he may have had in the

transactions alleged against him. For my own part, I can see no impropriety in his taking contracts, or making money out of them, as that is a mere matter of business. There is nothing wrong in this, unless some unfairness or dishonesty is shown, which supposition I have no doubt Gen. Cameron will be able to disprove. I shall deal fairly with him, but I say to you, gentlemen, frankly, that if the charges against him are proven, he cannot have a seat in my Cabinet, as I will not have any man associated with me whose character is impeached. I will say further, that if he vindicates himself, I have the strongest desire to place him in the position you wish him to fill, and which you think the interests of your State demand. If, after he has been appointed, I should be deceived by subsequent transactions of a disreputable character, the responsibility will rest upon you gentlemen of Pennsylvania who have so strongly presented his claims to my consideration. But this is supposing a state of things which may never occur.”<sup>145</sup>

To help clarify matters, Lincoln asked his trouble-shooter Leonard Swett to visit Harrisburg. There Swett interviewed supporters and detractors of Cameron, including McClure, who told him that the president-elect must abandon Cameron and support Thaddeus Stevens, for leading politicians of Pennsylvania were backing the Lancaster congressman. Swett “expressed great amazement at the information, altho he admitted that he had seen Cameron just before leaving Washington. He said that Cameron was positively averse to the appointment of any one but himself from Penna.” Swett added that if Pennsylvanians “did not accede to Cameron” they “would be without a representative & that Chase would have the Treasury.” According to McClure, Swett was “thoroughly in the Cameron interest, and exhausted himself while here to frighten us by

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<sup>145</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:179-80.

the danger of an unsound Tariff man in the Treasury.”<sup>146</sup>

Torn by conflicting advice that poured in, and reluctant to appoint a spoilsman to his cabinet, Lincoln was, as Herndon told Trumbull, “in a fix. Cameron’s appointment to an office in his Cabinet bothers him. If Lincoln do appoint Cameron he gets a fight on his hands, and if he do not he gets a quarrel deep-abiding, & lasting. . . . Poor Lincoln! God help him!”<sup>147</sup> In early February, Lincoln said that the question of Cameron’s appointment had given him “more trouble than anything that he had yet to encounter,” including the secession of the Lower South. He would, once he was in Washington, ask the Republican senators their candid opinion of the Winnebago Chief.<sup>148</sup>

The struggle over Chase pitted Lincoln against Seward in a battle to determine who would control the administration. When it was announced that the New Yorker had accepted the state department portfolio, Weed’s paper called him the “Premier” of the cabinet.<sup>149</sup> George G. Fogg warned the president-elect that “Seward would insist on being master of the administration, and would utterly scorn the idea of playing a subordinate part. He has no more doubt of his measureless superiority to you, than of his existence. And this has been apparent from the day when Mr. Weed so magnificently announced that Mr. S[eward] had ‘accepted the premiership in Mr. Lincoln's Cabinet.’ That very term ‘premiership’ told the whole story – that Mr. Lincoln had selected his ‘prime minister,’ and was henceforth to be subject to his policy, just as the queen or king of England is subject to the policy of the ministry.” The Sage of Auburn “contemptuously

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<sup>146</sup> McClure to Thaddeus Stevens, Harrisburg, 21 January [1861], Stevens Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>147</sup> Herndon to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 27 January 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>148</sup> William Butler to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 7 February 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; William Larimer to Cameron, Pittsburgh, 6 February 1861, Cameron Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>149</sup> “Mr. Lincoln’s Secretary of State,” Albany Evening Journal, 9 January 1861.



expects to make you ‘play second fiddle’ to all his schemes, and those of Weed too.”<sup>150</sup> Francis P. Blair, Sr., thought Seward would try to undermine Lincoln in order to win the presidency in 1864. The New York senator, in Blair’s view, “has the most eager restless ambition for power of any man I have known and Weed the greediest maw for the spoils of Govt. The last is the Jackall of the first. Neither can wait 8 years for the consummation of their hopes.”<sup>151</sup>

The first scheme that Seward and Weed tried to carry out was to dominate the cabinet by packing it with former Whigs who would defer to the New Yorker and agree with him that the South ought to be conciliated and the slavery issue deemphasized. Chase was anathema to the Albany Duo because he espoused radical antislavery views and fought against any appeasement of the secessionists; in addition, he had a strong personality and would challenge Seward for leadership of the cabinet. From late December, when he accepted the State Department portfolio, till inauguration day in March, Seward, with the help of his fidus Achates Weed, lobbied against Chase and for Cameron. To reconcile these contending forces would severely tax Lincoln’s patience and statesmanship.

On December 31, the day he offered Cameron a cabinet post, Lincoln urgently summoned Chase: “In these troublous times, I would much like a conference with you. Please visit me here at once.”<sup>152</sup> The president-elect received strong recommendations for the Ohioan from William Cullen Bryant, George G. Fogg, Joseph Medill, Elihu B. Washburne, Amos Tuck, Owen Lovejoy, John F. Farnsworth, John P. Hale, and other

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<sup>150</sup> Fogg to Lincoln, Washington, 5 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>151</sup> Blair to Mrs. Norman B. Judd, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20 January 1861, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

<sup>152</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:168.

radicals who regarded Chase as an essential counterbalance to Seward.<sup>153</sup> Amos Tuck assured him that without Chase, “I fear too much of the N. York flavor will be attributed to the administration, and its patronage.”<sup>154</sup> Joshua Giddings urged Lincoln to appoint not only Chase but also two other Radicals to the cabinet.<sup>155</sup>

Protectionists and moderate Republicans objected to Chase.<sup>156</sup> Columbus Delano presciently warned that the Ohioan “will use his place first and chiefly to promote his own ambition. His past history justifies this opinion; and he will, probably, become an embarrassing element in Mr. Lincoln's cabinet, as well as an embarrassing element in any fair adjustment of our national troubles.”<sup>157</sup> Other Buckeyes called Chase a “supremely selfish” and “very vindictive” political “schemer.” Congressman Benjamin Stanton described Chase as “specially obnoxious to the Conservative Republicans of Ohio. His antecedents . . . are of the most extreme character – a [James G.] Birney man in 1844, a Van Buren man in 1848 and a [John P.] Hale man in 1852, no man has done so much to break down the Old Whig party of Ohio.”<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>153</sup> William Cullen Bryant to Lincoln, 10 November 1860, George G. Fogg to Lincoln, 13 December 1860; Joseph Medill to Lincoln, 18 December 1860; Elihu B. Washburne to Lincoln, 10 January 1861; Amos Tuck to Abraham Lincoln, 14 January 1861; Owen Lovejoy, John F. Farnsworth, and Elihu B. Washburne to Lincoln, Washington, 18 January 1861; John P. Hale to Lincoln, Washington, 19 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>154</sup> Amos Tuck to Lincoln, Exeter, N. H., 14 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>155</sup> Giddings to Chase, Galesburg, Illinois, 7 December 1860; same to same, Jefferson, Ohio, 18 December 1860, Chase Papers, Historical Society of Pennsylvania; Giddings to Gerrit Smith, Jefferson, Ohio, 29 December 1860, Smith Papers, Syracuse University.

<sup>156</sup> John Wallower Jr. to Lincoln, Harrisburg, 21 January 1861; S. S. Wharton to Lincoln, Harrisburg, 21 January 1861; John W. Killinger to Lincoln, Washington, 15 January 1861; R. P. King to Lincoln, Philadelphia, 18 January 1861; Leonard Ulmer, Jesse G. Ulmer, and James L. Rightmyer to Lincoln, Williamsport, 23 January 1861; Francis Jordan to Lincoln, Harrisburg, 23 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>157</sup> John D. Defrees to David Davis, Washington, 18 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>158</sup> William M. Wilson to Lincoln, Drake County, Ohio, 19 January 1861; Benjamin Stanton to Lincoln, Washington, 12 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

On Friday, January 4, the Ohio governor (and senator-elect) arrived in Springfield, where he spent two days. Lincoln began their first interview by thanking Chase for his help during the 1858 campaign against Douglas.<sup>159</sup> Indeed, the president-elect felt “under obligations for his services” in that contest.<sup>160</sup> Lincoln made his guest a peculiar offer: “I have done with you what I would not perhaps had ventured to do with any other man in the country – sent for you to ask you whether you will accept the appointment of Secretary of the Treasury, without, however, being exactly prepared to offer it to you.”<sup>161</sup> The problem was “mainly the uncertainty whether the app[ointment]t w[ould] be satisfactory to Pennsylvania.” The hyper-ambitious Chase replied that he was not eager for a cabinet post, especially a subordinate one, and would prefer to keep the senate seat which he was to occupy beginning in March. In a later session that weekend, Lincoln told him “that he had offered the post of Secy. of State to Mr. Seward believing that Mr. Seward[']s relations to the party entitled him to the offer & that his services in that position would be [extremely] useful to the country; that had Mr. Seward declined he shd. without hesitation have offered it to me; and that Mr. S– had accepted.” Chase coyly promised to think over the possibility of heading the treasury department, and Lincoln pledged to write him more definitely soon. (The Ohioan reportedly would not accept the post “without great urging.”) Chase said their conversations “were entirely free &

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<sup>159</sup> Chase to Lincoln, Columbus, 11 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>160</sup> David Davis paraphrased in Jonathan Renick to Benjamin F. Wade, Circleville, Ohio, 17 February 1861, Wade Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>161</sup> J. W. Schuckers, The Life and Public Services of Salmon Portland Chase (New York: D. Appleton, 1874), 201.

unreserved” and that he had “every reason to be satisfied with the personal confidence which Mr. Lincoln manifested in me.”<sup>162</sup>

The two men admired each other.<sup>163</sup> Chase prized Lincoln’s “clearsightedness, uprightness, fidelity to the principles he represents, & firm resolve to administer the Government in the most patriotic spirit” and called him “a genuine patriot of the old school” who “loves the Country & the Union with the devotion of a son.” Although Lincoln “may not be so radical as some would wish,” he was nonetheless in Chase’s view “perfectly sincere” and could be counted on to “never surrender our principles or seek to abase our standard.”<sup>164</sup> Lincoln “praised Chase very highly, saying among other things, that ‘take him all in all he is the foremost man in the party.’”<sup>165</sup> He regarded the Ohioan “as the Moses that brought us out of the land of bondage, but he had not been as lucky as some of us in reaching the promised land. I esteem him highly, very highly.”<sup>166</sup> Chase, he declared, was “the ablest & best man in America” and “about one hundred and fifty to any other man’s hundred.”<sup>167</sup> When told that George Opdyke “had but one choice before you,” Lincoln replied, “Yes, I know his first choice [was Chase], & I prefer him to myself

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<sup>162</sup> Chase to James Shepherd Pike, Columbus 10 January 1861, Pike Papers, University of Maine; Chase to John P. Hale, Columbus, 14 January 1861, Hale Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society; Chase to Elihu B. Washburne, Columbus, 14 January 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; C. H. Ray to Elihu B. Washburne, Springfield, 7 January 1861, *ibid.*; Chase to James T. Worthington, Columbus, 14 January 1861, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

<sup>163</sup> George G. Fogg to Chase, New York, 7 November 1860, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>164</sup> Chase to N. P. Banks, Springfield, 7 January 1861 [misdated 1860], Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University; Chase to James T. Worthington, Columbus, 14 January 1861, Lincoln Collection, Brown University; Chase to Joshua Giddings, Columbus, 15 December 1860, Giddings-Julian Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>165</sup> C. H. Ray to E. B. Washburne, Springfield, 7 January 1861, Elihu B. Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>166</sup> Thomas D. Jones to William Linn McMillen, Springfield, 30 December 1860, Lincoln Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

<sup>167</sup> George S. Boutwell, *Reminiscences of Sixty Years in Public Affairs*, (2 vols.; New York: McClure, Phillips, 1902), 1:275; Hiram Barney to William Cullen Bryant, Chicago, 17 January 1861, Bryant-Godwin Papers, New York Public Library.

for Rev Dr Beaufort (if I have the name right) says Gov. Chase combines greater executive, administrative, & statesmanlike ability, than any man living.”<sup>168</sup> Lincoln told Charles Sumner that “of all the public men he had ever known, Chase was equal to one and a half of the best of them.”<sup>169</sup> In time, Lincoln would come to think less highly of the opportunistic, stately, vain, self-important, egotistical, Machiavellian, humorless, cold, industrious, priggish, and imperious Ohioan.

In late January, Chase expressed reluctance to join the cabinet; his feelings were hurt by Lincoln’s failure to offer him the treasury portfolio unconditionally. If the president-elect “had thought fit to tender me the Treasury Department with the same considerate respect which was manifested towards Mr. Seward and Mr. Bates I might have felt under a pretty strong obligation to . . . accept it,” he complained.<sup>170</sup> Rhetorically he asked the New York abolitionist John Jay: “Would you be willing to take charge of a broken-down department, as a member of a cabinet with which you could not be sure of six months agreement, and enslave yourself to the most toilsome drudgery almost without respite for four years, exchanging a position from which you could speak freely to the country during half the year and during the other half retire to books, travel or friends for one you could not speak at all except through a report and where no leisure is to be expected?” But, Chase said, if the offer were repeated, “I shall consider all the wishes so flatteringly if not kindly expressed, and if really satisfied that I ought to take the post I

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<sup>168</sup> Lincoln allegedly told this to John A. C. Gray of New York shortly after the convention. James A. Briggs to Chase, New York, 30 May 1860, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>169</sup> In 1874, Sumner related this to Jacob W. Schuckers. Undated memo by Schuckers, Schuckers Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>170</sup> Chase to Lizzie Pike, Columbus, 27 January 1861, Pike Papers, University of Maine.

shall. But I do not now see on what grounds I could be so satisfied.”<sup>171</sup> This coyness was disingenuous, for behind the scenes Chase was urging George Opdyke and others to lobby on his behalf for the cabinet post.<sup>172</sup>

Alarmed by the appointment of Seward and Bates, Chase feared that ex-Whigs would dominate the cabinet; he regarded Cameron, though nominally a former Democrat, as a tool of Seward. When rumor suggested that another quondam Whig, Caleb B. Smith of Indiana, would be appointed, he protested to Lincoln that the Hoosier’s ethics were suspect.<sup>173</sup> The fifty-two-year-old Smith had been president of a Cincinnati railroad company that went bankrupt in 1857; he had also served on the Mexican Claims Commission, whose actions “stunk in the nostrils of the American people.”<sup>174</sup> According to Joseph Medill, “Chase regards Smith with aversion on account of his notoriously corrupt conduct as Commissioner on Mexican claims. The Gardiner claim was a sample of the way he did business. His action as President of a Railroad is reported to have been shamefully dishonest.”<sup>175</sup> Medill viewed the short, overweight, ingratiating Smith as “a doughface,” a “cipher on the right hand of the Seward integer,” a “fugitive slave law –

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<sup>171</sup> Chase to John Jay, Columbus, 16 January 1861, Jay Family Papers, Columbia University.

<sup>172</sup> John Niven, Salmon P. Chase: A Biography (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), 222ff; Chase to Hiram Barney, cars from Springfield to Lafayette, 8 January 1861; Chase to Opdyke, Columbus, 9 January 1861, John Niven, ed., The Salmon P. Chase Papers (5 vols.; Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1993-1998), 3:44-46.

<sup>173</sup> Chase to Lincoln, Columbus 11 January 1861, Niven, ed., Chase Papers, 3:48-49.

<sup>174</sup> Washington correspondence by “Potomac,” 21 March, Baltimore Exchange, 23 March 1861.

<sup>175</sup> Medill to Charles H. Ray, Washington, 13 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. The Mexican Claims Commission, established by the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe-Hidalgo, awarded George A. Gardiner \$428,000 for a silver mine he allegedly lost to the Mexicans, even though the claim was transparently fraudulent. After his conviction on a forgery charge, Gardiner committed suicide. Ohio Senator Thomas Corwin, who served as an attorney before the Commission – on which his cousin Robert G. Corwin sat – bought a share of the claim. Smith helped guarantee the \$22,500 loan that Corwin used to buy his share, which yielded him a profit of \$20,000. Mark W. Summers, The Plundering Generation: Corruption and the Crisis of the Union, 1849-1861 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 159-60; Henry Cohen, Business and Politics in America from the Age of Jackson to the Civil War: The Career Biography of W. W. Corcoran (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood, 1971), 123-27.

Southern ‘Constitutional guarantee’ fanatic, and a hater of free principles.”<sup>176</sup> Chase’s organ, the Cincinnati Commercial, ridiculed Smith as a “poor businessman” with a “total want of administrative ability” who could not meet the Jeffersonian qualifications of “being honest and capable.”<sup>177</sup> Schuyler Colfax warned that “Smith’s Soap Factory, Mexican Claim Commission, and Railroad management at Cincinnati are ugly matters for Lincoln to get over.”<sup>178</sup> A leading Indianapolis Republican called Smith a “debauched corrupt politician.”<sup>179</sup> Josiah M. Lucas informed Lincoln that word of “the appointment of Smith, has awakened the reminiscences of Galphinism and Gardnerism. You remember that Smith, [former Whig Senator George] Evans of Maine &c, composed that celebrated Board on Mexican indemnities, who passed sundry claims that the country, with general acclaim pronounced against – whilst the skirts of the Board were by many believed to be unclean.”<sup>180</sup> In light of this record, Lincoln hesitated to name Smith to the cabinet.<sup>181</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Medill to Schuyler Colfax, ca. December 1862, in Hollister, Colfax, 200; Medill to E. B. Washburne, Chicago, 13 January 1862, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>177</sup> Cincinnati Commercial, 7, 8, 12, 18 January 1861, in Richard J. Thomas, “Caleb Blood Smith: Whig Orator and Politician: Lincoln’s Secretary of the Interior” (Ph.D. dissertation, Indiana University, 1969), 167. Smith claimed that the paper had a personal animus against him. Smith to Richard W. Thompson, Washington, 16 April 1861, Thompson Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

<sup>178</sup> Schuyler Colfax to [Alfred] Wheeler, [Washington], 11 January 1861, Forest H. Sweet, manuscript dealer, list no. 89, clipping from an undated catalogue, David Rankin Barbee Papers, Georgetown University.

<sup>179</sup> Gayle Thornbrough et al., eds., The Diary of Calvin Fletcher (7 vols.; Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1972-81), 7:49 (entry for 19 February 1861).

<sup>180</sup> Josiah M. Lucas to Lincoln, Washington, 10 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. Heirs of George Galphin, an eighteenth-century Indian trader, claimed that the U.S. owed them money that had been promised to Galphin. In 1848, Congress appropriated \$44,000 to honor the claim. The heirs then insisted that they were owed interest on that amount dating back to the Colonial era (\$191,000). The lawyer representing the Galphin heirs, George Crawford, was to receive half of the amount awarded. Crawford, then secretary of war, won the case for his client thanks to opinions written by his fellow cabinet members, Attorney General Reverdy Johnson and Secretary of the Treasury William Meredith. Summers, Plundering Generation, 157-58.

<sup>181</sup> John D. Defrees to Thurlow Weed, Washington, 11 January 1861, Weed Papers, University of Rochester.

Some considered Smith intellectually ill-equipped for a cabinet post. Henry Villard, who deplored his “incompetency” and “worse than mediocrity,” reported that the “mental caliber of that choice of the Hoosier politicians seems to be thought altogether inadequate to a creditable performance of the duties of the Secretary of the Interior.” Smith’s “only real qualification,” he sneered, “is a stentorian voice.”<sup>182</sup> While conceding that Smith was a superior stump speaker, John D. Defrees predicted he would be “worthless as a Cabinet officer.”<sup>183</sup> Smith was also derided as a “fossil.” James C. Veatch, a key delegate to the Chicago Convention who had actively supported of Lincoln, told the president-elect that the Buchanan administration “shows most clearly of how little value in times of peril are these old gentlemen of the past generation.”<sup>184</sup>

Lincoln felt grateful to Smith, a noted orator, for helping him win both the presidential nomination and the election. Shortly after the Chicago Convention, he wrote him saying: “I am, indeed, much indebted to Indiana; and, as my home friends tell me, much to you personally.”<sup>185</sup> In late January 1861, Lincoln spoke of the recent campaign, “dwelling especially on the eloquence and ability” of Smith, “who had, in his opinion, rendered him more effective service than any other public speaker.”<sup>186</sup> David Davis encouraged Lincoln in this belief. “Mr Smith is an able man,” the judge told the president-elect in November. “He has worked harder in the canvass this year than any

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<sup>182</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 10 January, Cincinnati Commercial, 14 January 1861; Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 29 December 1860, 12 January 1861, New York Herald, 3, 18 January 1861.

<sup>183</sup> John D. Defrees to David Davis, Indianapolis, 26 November 1860, Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>184</sup> James C. Veatch to Lincoln, Indianapolis, 18 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>185</sup> Lincoln to Smith, Springfield, 26 May 1860, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:55.

<sup>186</sup> Lincoln told this to Augustus Chapman on January 30, 1861. Jesse W. Weik, The Real Lincoln: A Portrait, ed. Michael Burlingame (1922; Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2002), 294.



man in Indiana— No one rendered more efficient service from Indiana at the Chicago Convention than he did.” Davis, who had promised Indiana a place in the cabinet (and perhaps specified that it would go to Smith), added: “Indiana, as you have assured me, will receive a cabinet appointment from you – but I do not know who you have thought of for the position— . . . I should really be gratified – if Caleb B. Smith could receive the appointment.”<sup>187</sup>

Smith’s principal Indiana competitor was Congressman Schuyler Colfax of South Bend.<sup>188</sup> Though Henry Villard speculated that the president-elect’s “deep grudge against Colfax ever since the latter’s advocacy of Douglas’s claims to reelection in 1858” would prevent the congressman’s elevation to the cabinet, Lincoln denied harboring any such resentment.<sup>189</sup> In December, when Indiana Republican leaders called at Springfield to lobby for Smith, they suggested that Colfax “was a man of detail and too inexperienced” and “that his reputation and claims were manufactured by newspaper scribblers.” Lincoln replied that he “could only say that he saw no insuperable objections to Indiana’s having a man [in the cabinet], nor to Smith’s being that man.”<sup>190</sup> Others were less confident of Colfax’s ability. Maine Governor Israel Washburn objected to his cabinet candidacy, asserting that “it would be most disgraceful for that flunkey & trifler to be in any white

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<sup>187</sup> Russell Errett to Lincoln, Pittsburgh, 21 November 1860; David Davis to Lincoln, Danville, 19 November 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>188</sup> Hollister, Colfax, 174-75.

<sup>189</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 31 January, New York Herald, 7 February 1861; Basler, ed. Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:278. In fact, when Colfax campaigned in Illinois in 1858, he denounced slavery but avoided endorsing either Lincoln or Douglas. South Bend, Indiana, Register, 11 November 1858, in Willard H. Smith, Schuyler Colfax: The Changing Fortunes of a Political Idol (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1952), 109-10.

<sup>190</sup> John G. Nicolay, memorandum, 11 December 1860, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 15. Cf. Henry H. Fowler to Lincoln, Bristol, Indiana, 4 February 1861, typed copy, Lane Papers, Indiana University.

man’s company.”<sup>191</sup> During his visit to Springfield, George G. Fogg lobbied against Colfax.<sup>192</sup>

The financially strapped Smith eagerly sought the post.<sup>193</sup> One Hoosier, noting Smith’s personal problems, asked Lincoln if Smith “can not manage his own affairs,” then “how can he manage Government affairs?”<sup>194</sup> The Radical George W. Julian protested against the conservative Smith, arguing that “[n]o man's record as a business man & financier for the past twenty years & more is so uniformly & consistently bad, & this is too well known to allow his appointment to the post in question to be regarded as even tolerable by the country.”<sup>195</sup>

To offset such criticism, Smith skillfully organized a letter-writing campaign which swelled Lincoln’s mail bag.<sup>196</sup> Colfax complained that “Smith has been guilty of the meanness of writing himself into my district and other portions of the North, saying that Lincoln wants to appoint him, but does not wish to offend Northern Indiana which all seems for me; and urging them to get signatures privately to a recommendation for him

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<sup>191</sup> Israel Washburn to Elihu B. Washburne, Boston, 9 February 1861, Washburn Papers, Washburn Family Library, Norlands, Maine.

<sup>192</sup> Bainbridge Wadleigh to Mason Tappan, Milford, N.H., 14 December 1860, Tappan Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

<sup>193</sup> Russell Errett to Lincoln, Pittsburgh, 21 November 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>194</sup> W. M. Winslow to Lincoln, Muncie, 9 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>195</sup> George W. Julian to Lincoln, n.p., 23 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>196</sup> See the following endorsements of Smith in the Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress: Indiana delegates at the republican national convention, Indianapolis, 22 November 1860; Indiana congressional delegation (six Congressmen), Washington, 21 December 1860; Thomas G. Slaughter and Walter Q. Gresham, Corydon, Indiana, 31 December 1860; fifth congressional district citizens, New Castle, Indiana, 29 December 1860; Jacob Julian, Centreville, Indiana, 1 January 1861; Solomon Meredith, Cambridge City, Indiana, 31 December 1860, 2 January 1861; David P. Holloway, Springfield, Illinois, 5 January 1861; John S. Davis, New Albany, Indiana, 7 January 1861; Thomas J. Sample, Muncie, Indiana, 12, 26 January 1861; Robert C. Schenck to A. H. Conner, Dayton, Ohio, 14 January 1861; Indiana state senate members, 19 January 1861; Indiana state house of representatives, 20 January 1861; Indianapolis Republican citizens, 19 January 1861; H. G. Hazelregg et al., Indianapolis, 20 January 1861; George W. Runyan, Cincinnati, 19 January 1861; R. M. Moore to Thomas D. Jones, Cincinnati, 20 January 1861.

and send them to Springfield. I could have had thousands all over the state if I had descended to this kind of electioneering.”<sup>197</sup> Smith was “moving every appliance possible, promising patronage & electioneering, all of which I will not do,” Colfax observed.<sup>198</sup> When Cyrus Allen called on Lincoln to endorse Colfax, the president-elect said that no pro-Colfax delegations had lobbied him and that he therefore supposed Colfax did not enjoy earnest support.<sup>199</sup> In fact, Colfax was unwilling to engage in an all-out lobbying effort, though he did work behind the scenes to win newspaper endorsements.<sup>200</sup> “I don’t believe in any Committee of my friends from Ind[iana] going to Springfield,” he said. “Let Smith’s friends bore Mr. Lincoln that way if they will.” In early January, when he became convinced that Smith had defeated him, Colfax explained the likely outcome: “Smith’s persistent electioneering & his friends, with my refusal to pledge offices & follow his example has done it. . . . Mr. Lincoln said last week that with the troubles before us I could not be spared from Congress – that a new & untried man would fill my place . . . [and] that Smith had nothing, while I was in office.”<sup>201</sup> (In 1862,

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<sup>197</sup> Colfax to [Alfred] Wheeler, [Washington], 11 January 1861, Forest H. Sweet, manuscript dealer, list no. 89, clipping from an undated catalogue, David Rankin Barbee Papers, Georgetown University.

<sup>198</sup> Colfax to George Washburn, Washington, 26 December 1860, George Washburn Papers, Western Reserve Historical Society, Cleveland. Cf. Colfax to Henry S. Lane, Washington, 31 January 1861, typed copy, Lane Papers, Indiana University.

<sup>199</sup> Colfax to [Richard Yates], Washington, 11 January 1861, L. U. Reavis Papers, Chicago History Museum. This may have been an exaggeration, for on December 22, when George B. Lincoln called on the president-elect and recommended that Colfax be appointed postmaster general, he was told that Colfax’s “name had been repeatedly mentioned to him in that same connexion.” George B. Lincoln to Schuyler Colfax, Chicago, 29 December 1860, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

<sup>200</sup> Colfax to Richard W. Thompson, South Bend, Indiana, 8 November 1860, Richard W. Thompson Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne; Colfax to Francis E. Spinner, [South Bend?, 12 October 1860], fragment, H. K. Crofoot Collection of Spinner Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>201</sup> Colfax to Charles Heaton, 27 December 1860, 8 January 1861, in Smith, *Colfax*, 140. See also Colfax to Henry S. Lane, Washington, 31 January 1861, typed copy, Lane Papers, Indiana University; Richard Yates to Colfax, Springfield, 6 February 1861, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

Colfax turned down a cabinet offer because he justly feared that his seat in the House would be captured by a Democrat.)<sup>202</sup>

Foremost among Smith's backers were Seward and Weed, aided by David Davis and Leonard Swett. In December and January, Swett reported from Washington that he was doing all he could for Smith. He worked closely with Seward, informing Lincoln that the Sage of Auburn believed that the cabinet should be ideologically homogeneous. Lincoln's desire to have a heterogeneous cabinet was "all very well for fair-weather times," but not in a period of crisis like the one they faced. Therefore he recommended former Whigs like Smith.<sup>203</sup> A week later, Swett told the president-elect that "[e]verybody thinks Colfax is a clever fellow but a gun of too small bore" and that Smith "is very well spoken of[.]"<sup>204</sup> Even his supporters conceded that Colfax "is not a great man."<sup>205</sup> Smith argued that Colfax enjoyed support only in northern Indiana and that Colfax's backers there regarded Smith as their second choice.<sup>206</sup>

In addition to Colfax, Smith faced competition from Norman B. Judd, whose candidacy was championed by former Democrats like Lyman Trumbull, Gustave Koerner, Ebenezer Peck, Joseph Medill, and the Blairs. Fierce opposition came from Illinois ex-Whigs like Richard Yates, Leonard Swett, William Kellogg, and David Davis, who could not forgive Judd for his unwillingness to support Lincoln during the senatorial

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<sup>202</sup> Colfax to Horace Greeley, Washington, 5 March 1863, Greeley Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>203</sup> Swett to Lincoln, Washington, 31 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>204</sup> Swett to Lincoln, Washington 5 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>205</sup> Richard C. Parsons to John Sherman, Cleveland, 12 December 1860, John Sherman Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>206</sup> Smith to David Davis, Washington, 5 February 1861, David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

contest six years earlier.<sup>207</sup> Lincoln, ever magnanimous, would have liked to appoint Judd, but feared such a move would alienate too many allies.<sup>208</sup> He told Gideon Welles “that he had, personally a stronger desire that Judd should be associated with him in the administration than any one else but he was from Illinois.”<sup>209</sup> He acknowledged that “he never had a truer friend” than Judd and that “there was no one in whom he placed greater confidence,” still the appointment of a fellow Illinoisan would embarrass him.<sup>210</sup> He had only seven cabinet positions to fill and wished to use them to strengthen the Republican party in key states like Indiana, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York, as well as important regions like the South and New England; Illinois did not need a representative in the cabinet, for it already had one in the White House.<sup>211</sup> He told a delegation of Judd’s supporters “that if his occupancy of the office of President could not command the undivided loyalty of Illinois, a dozen Cabinet officers could not do it, adding that he had never doubted the loyalty of his own State, and that it was the border States which were the objects of his greatest solicitude.”<sup>212</sup> The battle over Judd, which raged throughout

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<sup>207</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 21 January, Cincinnati Commercial, 25 January 1861; Jesse W. Fell to Lincoln, Bloomington, January 2, 1861; Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 7 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; F. P. Blair to Frank Blair, Silver Spring, 2 January 1861, Blair Family Papers, Library of Congress; B. C. Cook to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 9 January 1861; Ebenezer Peck to Trumbull, Springfield, 10 January 1861; Gustave Koerner to Trumbull, Springfield, 21 January 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; J. W. Shaffer to Elihu B. Washburne, Freeport, 29 January 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; King, Davis, 170-71.

<sup>208</sup> Frank Blair to Montgomery Blair, St. Louis, 24 January 1861, Blair Family Papers, Library of Congress; Hiram Barney to William Cullen Bryant, Chicago, 17 January 1861, Bryant-Godwin Papers, New York Public Library.

<sup>209</sup> Undated memo by Welles, Lincoln’s Cabinet Collection, Lincoln Museum, Fort Wayne, Indiana.

<sup>210</sup> Summary of a letter from William Butler, who had spoken with Lincoln, to Judd, n.p., n.d., in Judd to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 3 January 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>211</sup> W. W. Gitt to William P. Fessenden, Rockville, Indiana, 17 February 1861, Fessenden Papers, Library of Congress; Silas Noble to E. B. Washburne, Dixon, Illinois, 14 January 1861, Washburne Papers, Library of Congress; Koerner, Memoirs, 2:115.

<sup>212</sup> “Lincoln’s Time of Agony,” reminiscences of Joseph Gillespie, Springfield correspondence, 2 February, New York Tribune, 5 February 1888.

January, became “a source of great tribulation” to Lincoln, who doubtless recalled the howl of protest raised when Buchanan named an attorney general (Jeremiah Black) from his own state of Pennsylvania.<sup>213</sup>

Adding to his distress was the intervention by Mrs. Lincoln, who thought of herself as “a sort of sub-President.”<sup>214</sup> From New York, where she had gone to shop, she predicted to David Davis that “Judd would cause trouble & dissatisfaction, & if Wall Street testifies correctly, his business transactions, have not always borne inspection.” New Yorkers, she reported, “were laughing at the idea of Judd, being in any way, connected with the Cabinet in these times, when honesty in high places is so important.” She asked Davis to use his influence to block Judd.<sup>215</sup> The Chicago attorney complained that his opponents had used every possible tactic to defeat him, “including female influence.”<sup>216</sup> (Nine years later, Mary Lincoln obsequiously and fawningly appealed to Judd to help her win a pension from Congress.)<sup>217</sup>

According to Herman Kreismann in Washington, “Mrs Lincoln’s journey is considered very much out of place. The idea of the President[’]s wife kiting about the country and holding levees at which she indulges in a multitude of silly speeches is

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<sup>213</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 22 January, New York Herald, 23 January 1861; Springfield correspondence, 10 November, New York Daily News, 12 November 1860.

<sup>214</sup> Henry B. Stanton, Random Recollections (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; New York: Harper and Brothers, 1887), 221.

<sup>215</sup> Mary Todd Lincoln to David Davis, New York, 7 January 1861, Justin G. Turner and Linda Levitt Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln: Her Life and Letters (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 71. On her trip, Mrs. Lincoln was accompanied by Amos Tuck and her brother-in-law, Clark M. Smith. After shopping in New York, she planned to visit Robert at Harvard. Cleveland Herald, 10 January, copied in the Chicago Tribune, 12 January 1861.

<sup>216</sup> Summary of a letter from William Butler, who had spoken with Lincoln, to Judd, n.p., n.d., in Judd to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 3 January 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:390 (entry for 3 December 1865).

<sup>217</sup> Mary Todd Lincoln to Norman B. Judd, Marienbad, Bohemia, 2 June 1870, Turner and Turner, eds., Mary Todd Lincoln, 563-64.

looked upon as very shocking. . . . Among other interesting speeches of Mrs L. reported here is that she says her husband had to give Mr Seward a place. The pressure was so great; but he did it very reluctantly.”<sup>218</sup> Mary Lincoln did not like Seward and, given her propensity to speak “right out in plain terms what she thinks,” let her feelings be known to visitors.<sup>219</sup> When her spouse indicated to a caller that he would give the New Yorker the state department portfolio, she interrupted: “Never! Never! Seward in the Cabinet! Never. If all things should go on all right – the credit would go to Seward – if they went wrong – the blame would fall upon my husband. Seward in the Cabinet! Never!”<sup>220</sup> Two weeks after the election, she told guests at her home: “The country will find how we regard that Abolition sneak Seward.” Her husband “put the remark aside, very much as he did the hand of one of his boys when that hand invaded his capacious mouth.”<sup>221</sup> Later, when Mrs. Lincoln told the president that Seward lacked principles and “is worse than Chase,” he replied: “Mother, you are mistaken; your prejudices are so violent that you do not stop to reason. Seward is an able man, and the country as well as myself can trust him.” She retorted: “Father, you are too honest for this world! You should have been

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<sup>218</sup> Herman Kreismann to Charles Henry Ray, Washington, 16 January 1861, Ray Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California. A Springfield correspondent, reporting shortly after Mrs. Lincoln’s return, said that the first-lady-to-be “enjoyed her visit to the metropolis exceedingly, and tells many amusing stories of her success in evading public attention. She compliments the Lelands of the Metropolitan [Hotel] and their entertainment very highly.” Springfield correspondence [by Richard J. McCormick], 28 January, New York Evening Post, 1 February 1861. According to Warren Leland, she and Robert were guests at his hotel for nearly two weeks and “were much pleased with our House & the attention paid them.” Warren Leland to E. D. Morgan, New York, 14 February 1861, Edwin D. Morgan Papers, New York State Library, Albany.

<sup>219</sup> Joshua Giddings to his wife Laura, Springfield, 2 December 1860, Giddings-Julian Papers, Library of Congress; Ruth Painter Randall, Mary Lincoln: Biography of a Marriage (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), 238-39, 251.

<sup>220</sup> George B. Lincoln, a merchant who became postmaster of Brooklyn during the Civil War, observed this outburst. George B. Lincoln to Gideon Welles, Riverdale, N.J., 25 April 1874, in “New Light on the Seward-Welles-Lincoln Controversy,” Lincoln Lore #1718 (April 1981): 2-3. George B. Lincoln visited the president-elect in his home on December 22, 1860. George B. Lincoln to Schuyler Colfax, Chicago, 29 December 1860, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.

<sup>221</sup> Donn Piatt, Memories of the Men Who Saved the Union (New York: Belford, Clarke, 1887), 31.

born a saint. You will generally find it a safe rule to distrust a disappointed, ambitious politician. It makes me mad to see you sit still and let that hypocrite, Seward, twine you around his finger as if you were a skein of thread.”<sup>222</sup> In 1863, she told Francis P. Blair, Sr., “that there was not a member of the Cabinet who did not stab her husband & the Country daily” except his son Montgomery. The First Lady added that “she did not know anything about Politics – but her instincts told her that much.”<sup>223</sup>

Lincoln passed over Judd, who in disgust told a friend that he would wash his hands “of politics and politicians. It requires more philosophy than I have got to do the drudgery and take only the kick and cuffs.”<sup>224</sup> Some believed Mrs. Lincoln deserved credit for blocking Judd, but that seems unlikely.<sup>225</sup> Upon hearing complaints that his wife was meddling in the selection of cabinet members, Lincoln replied: “Tell the gentleman not be alarmed, for I myself manage all important matters.”<sup>226</sup> Leonard Swett informed Ward Hill Lamon that he could tell Caleb Smith “what I know, that it was through the Illinois fight and judge Davis that Judd went out and he went in.”<sup>227</sup> As a consolation prize, Lincoln offered Judd the lucrative post of minister to Prussia, which he accepted.

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<sup>222</sup> Elizabeth Keckley, Behind the Scenes; or, Thirty Years a Slave and Four Years in the White House (New York: G. W. Carleton, 1868), 131.

<sup>223</sup> Elizabeth Blair Lee to her husband, Silver Spring, Maryland, 14 January [1863], Virginia Jeans Laas, ed., Wartime Washington: The Civil War Letters of Elizabeth Blair Lee (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1991), 231.

<sup>224</sup> Judd to Lyman Trumbull, Chicago, 24 December 1860, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>225</sup> Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:390 (entry for 3 December 1865).

<sup>226</sup> Stanton, Random Recollections, 221.

<sup>227</sup> Swett to Lamon, Bloomington, Illinois, 7 April 1861, Ward Hill Lamon, Recollections of Abraham Lincoln, 1847-1865, ed. Dorothy Lamon Teillard (2d ed.; Washington, D.C.: Privately published, 1911), 318.



To his running mate, Lincoln delegated the choice of a New Englander for the cabinet. Two days after the election, the president-elect invited Hamlin to confer with him in Chicago, where in late November they discussed cabinet matters at some length. After asking the vice-president-elect to negotiate with Seward and discussing candidates for the various posts, Lincoln mentioned some possible nominees for the navy department, including Charles Francis Adams and Nathaniel P. Banks of Massachusetts, Gideon Welles of Connecticut, and Amos Tuck of New Hampshire. When Lincoln praised Banks as a capable administrator with a national reputation, the Maine senator disagreed, calling the Bobbin Boy a “trimmer in politics.” Massachusetts Governor John A. Andrew denounced Banks’s “relations to ‘Know Nothingism;’ his non-committalism on any matter of principle in the face of any danger, & his willingness to make everything a subject of doubt by his logomachy of sounding and double meaning phrases.”<sup>228</sup> Banks, who had served three terms as governor of Massachusetts and as speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives, would remain a viable candidate, despite such disapproval.<sup>229</sup> In February 1861, Lincoln told friends of the former governor, “I like your man Banks, and have tried to find a place for him in my Cabinet, but I am afraid I shall not quite fetch it.”<sup>230</sup>

In December, Hamlin consulted with Seward, who played coy, “declaring he was tired of public life and that he intended to resign his seat or decline a reelection and retire,

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<sup>228</sup> Andrew to Lincoln, Boston, 20 January 1861, copy, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>229</sup> H. Draper Hunt, *Hannibal Hamlin of Maine: Lincoln’s First Vice-President* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1969), 127-29; Charles Eugene Hamlin, *The Life and Times of Hannibal Hamlin* (Cambridge: Riverside Press, 1899), 366-70; John Niven, *Gideon Welles: Lincoln’s Secretary of the Navy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 314-18.

<sup>230</sup> Lincoln told this to a Massachusetts physician, George B. Loring, and a friend of Loring’s. *Reminiscences of Loring*, New York *Tribune*, 9 August 1885.

that there was no place in the gift of the President which he would be willing to take.” When, however, the vice-president-elect handed him Lincoln’s letter offering him the state department portfolio, the Sage of Auburn “trembled and was nervous as he took it. He read the letter, put it in his pocket, and said, while his whole feelings were repugnant to a longer continuance in public employment, he yet was willing to labor for his country. He would, therefore, consult his friends before giving a final answer.”<sup>231</sup>

As Hamlin proceeded to carry out his assignments, Lincoln met with Thurlow Weed on December 20. When he expressed partiality for Welles, a former Democrat who edited the Hartford Evening Press, Lord Thurlow ridiculed the bearded, bewigged leader of the Connecticut Republicans. Facetiously he suggested that Lincoln could, while traveling to Washington for his inauguration, stop at an eastern seaport, buy a ship’s figure-head “to be adorned with an elaborate wig and luxuriant whiskers, and transfer it from the prow of a ship to entrance of the navy department.” It would, Weed jibed, “be quite as serviceable” as Welles, and cheaper.

“Oh,” replied Lincoln, “‘wooden midshipmen’ answer very well in novels, but we must have a live secretary in the navy.”<sup>232</sup>

The president-elect complained that Weed had been “very intrusive and importunate on this subject,” being “strongly opposed” to the entry into the cabinet of Welles or any other former Democrat, with the exception of Cameron. In addition to disliking Welles’ Democratic antecedents, Weed resented him for having opposed the

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<sup>231</sup> Hamlin told this to George G. Fogg in 1865. Fogg, in turn, related the story to Gideon Welles. Beale, ed., Welles Diary, 2:389 (entry for 3 December 1865). Weed believed that Hamlin would have advised Seward to decline the offer if the Sage of Auburn had asked his opinion. Weed to Seward, New York, 25 December 1860, Seward Papers, University of Rochester.

<sup>232</sup> Harriet A. Weed, Life of Thurlow Weed, Including His Autobiography and a Memoir (2 vols.; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1883-84), 2:611; Barnes, Weed, 294.

Sage of Auburn at the Chicago Convention. Lord Thurlow's pressure backfired, for his "intense opposition confirmed Mr Lincoln in the opposite direction."<sup>233</sup> (Before leaving Albany, Weed allegedly told a Lincoln backer: "Had Seward been nominated and elected it was my intention to have taken a foreign mission and gone abroad to avoid the charge that I would unduly influence Seward. But you beat him. You nominated a man whom you supposed was beyond my influence or control. Now G-d damn you I am going to show you who will influence Lincoln, who will go in his cabinet, who will shape his policy, who will control his patronage. If any of you can wield more influence over your man Lincoln than me, please to send me word when it is done, and I'll send you a receipt.")<sup>234</sup>

On Christmas eve, the president-elect instructed Hamlin to recommend "a man of Democratic antecedents from New England." He explained that he could not "get a fair share" of the Democratic element in the cabinet without appointing a Democrat from that region. "This," said Lincoln, "stands in the way of Mr. Adams." (Adams, happy to continue serving in Congress, had no desire for a cabinet post.)<sup>235</sup> He suggested Banks, Welles, or Tuck and asked which of them the New England congressional delegation preferred. "Or shall I decide for myself?"<sup>236</sup> (From the day after the election he had

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<sup>233</sup> Welles to Isaac N. Arnold, Hartford, 27 November 1872, Arnold Papers, Chicago History Museum; Gideon Welles, "Recollections in regard to the Formation of Mr Lincoln's Cabinet," undated manuscript, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

<sup>234</sup> Joseph Medill to Norman B. Judd, Washington, 20 January 1861, Medill Papers, Chicago History Museum. Medill claimed that this story came "straight from Albany by first hand."

<sup>235</sup> Charles Francis Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Washington, 15 December 1860, Adams Family Papers; Martin B. Duberman, Charles Francis Adams (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), 220-21.

<sup>236</sup> Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:161.

intended to appoint Welles but wished to give Hamlin a chance to voice his opinion.)<sup>237</sup> Lincoln had by this time decided on two former Whigs (Seward and Bates), and was leaning toward one more (Smith) and three ex-Democrats (Chase, Montgomery Blair, and Cameron). If he picked one more former Democrat, at cabinet meetings the number of ex-Whigs (including himself) would equal that of ex-Democrats. Therefore Adams, a former Whig, was out of the picture, despite Weed and Seward's entreaties. Amos Tuck, who was glad to receive the well-remunerated post of naval officer of the port of Boston, modestly recommended Welles as the best choice for New England.<sup>238</sup>

Despite Hamlin's aversion, the candidacy of Banks enjoyed strong support from influential Massachusetts businessmen and from the New York Herald. His eligibility for the New England seat, however, was compromised in the summer of 1860 when he accepted the presidency of the Illinois Central Railroad and agreed to move to Chicago.<sup>239</sup> After conferring with Lincoln, a friend reported to Banks that the president-elect said "had you remained in New England there would have been no second man thought of – that your name was in the first list that he ever made, that previous to his own election he did not feel at liberty to make any suggestion concerning your removal

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<sup>237</sup> Gideon Welles, "Recollections in regard to the Formation of Mr Lincoln's Cabinet," undated manuscript, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University; James F. Babcock to Gideon Welles, New Haven, 3 February 1868 (two letters of the same date), ibid. In December, Lincoln told Cameron that he intended to appoint Welles to the Cabinet. James Dixon to Mark Howard, Washington, 22 January 1861, Howard Papers, Connecticut Historical Society.

<sup>238</sup> Amos Tuck to Lincoln, Exeter N. H., 14 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Tuck to Salmon P. Chase, Exeter, 14 January 1861, Chase Papers, Library of Congress. In mid-January, Tuck told his son: "I staid at Mr Lincoln's house last Tuesday night, and came as far as Albany in company with Mrs. Lincoln and her brother in law. I had private talks with Mr. L. and he is under promise [sic] to give me an appointment worthy [of] my acceptance, in case I do not go into the Cabinet, which is possible, not probable. I guess I shall get just what I want, – the Boston Collectorship, – but cannot tell certainly." Amos Tuck to his son Ned, Exeter, N.H., 13 January 1861, Tuck Family Papers, Dartmouth College.

<sup>239</sup> Fred Harvey Harrington, Fighting Politician: Major General N. P. Banks (1948; Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1970), 49-53; Springfield (Massachusetts) Republican, 24 August 1860; James Dixon to Mark Howard, Washington, 23 January 1861, Howard Papers, Connecticut Historical Society.

from Massachusetts – but that the change put it out of his power to do what he should otherwise at once have done without a suggestion from any one.”<sup>240</sup>

That left Welles as the front runner. Months earlier he had impressed Lincoln during his campaign appearance in Hartford, and the president-elect knew of the helpful role Welles had played at the Chicago Convention. The Connecticut editor also had strong backing from Hamlin, Horace Greeley, John A. Andrew, Henry B. Stanton, Edwin D. Morgan, George G. Fogg, Edward Lillie Pierce, E. S. Cleveland, Congressman John Dennison Baldwin, and Senators Henry Wilson, James Dixon, and Preston King.<sup>241</sup> As Welles recalled, King, who had been a close friend for two decades, “was most earnest and emphatic in favor of my appointment, and was sleepless and unremitting in thwarting and defeating the intrigues of Weed and others against me.”<sup>242</sup> Lincoln, fearing that Welles might be too radical an opponent of the Fugitive Slave Act, had Hamlin investigate that matter; the vice-president-to-be interviewed Connecticut Senator James Dixon, who vouched for Welles’s soundness on the issue. Hamlin also elicited a letter from Welles explaining that while he deplored that law, wanted it reformed, and thought that states rather than the federal government should assume the responsibility of carrying it out, he nevertheless supported its enforcement.<sup>243</sup> Swett spoke highly of Welles.<sup>244</sup>

Thus when Lincoln, “very favorably impressed” with Welles’ “eminent fitness for the

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<sup>240</sup> George S. Boutwell to Banks, Boston, 8 March 1861, Banks Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library. See also George P. Burnham to Banks, Washington, 26 February 1861, Banks Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>241</sup> Dixon to Lyman Trumbull, Hartford, 13 November 1860, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Niven, Welles, 316-18.

<sup>242</sup> Gideon Welles, “Recollections in regard to the Formation of Mr Lincoln’s Cabinet,” undated manuscript, Abraham Lincoln Collection, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

<sup>243</sup> James Dixon to Welles, Washington, 3 December 1860, and Welles to Dixon, Hartford, 5 December 1860, Welles Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>244</sup> Leonard Swett to Lincoln, Washington, 5 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress

place,” left Springfield for Washington in mid-February, the Connecticut Republican stood the best chance of occupying the New England seat in the cabinet.<sup>245</sup> He told George G. Fogg that he intended to name Welles.<sup>246</sup>

Eager to keep the Upper South and Border States in the Union, Lincoln resolved to appoint a Marylander to his cabinet. “The propriety of giving a Cabinet appointment to that State is very generally recognized,” said the *New York Times*.<sup>247</sup> The two leading candidates were Montgomery Blair, the scholarly, quarrelsome, socially awkward West Point graduate and son of the long-time political insider Francis P. Blair, Sr., and Whig-American Congressman Henry Winter Davis, the combative, self-righteous, vain cousin of David Davis, who served as his “powerful advocate.”<sup>248</sup> The former had support from influential senators like Trumbull, Hamlin, Preston King, Zachariah Chandler and Benjamin F. Wade; Ohioans like Congressman John A. Gurley and governor-elect William Dennison; New Hampshire governor Ichabod Goodwin; John C. Fremont; and some leading Maryland Republicans.<sup>249</sup> But Weed and Seward supported Davis and

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<sup>245</sup> Dixon to Welles, Washington, 3 December 1860, Welles Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>246</sup> Undated clipping from an unidentified newspaper, copying a dispatch by the Washington correspondent of the *Hartford Evening Post*, scrapbook, Welles Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>247</sup> Washington correspondence, 11 February, *New York Times*, 12 February 1861.

<sup>248</sup> Washington correspondence by Noah Brooks, 2 May, *Sacramento Union*, 27 May 1863, in Michael Burlingame, ed., *Lincoln Observed: Civil War Dispatches of Noah Brooks* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 48-49; Washington correspondence by Noah Brooks, 1 July, *Sacramento Union*, 26 July 1863, *ibid.*, 120; Washington correspondence, 28 February, *Chicago Tribune*, 3 March 1864; William Ernest Smith, *The Francis Preston Blair Family in Politics* (2 vols.; New York: Macmillan, 1933), 1:211; Hendrick, *Lincoln's War Cabinet*, 66, 262; Gerald S. Henig, *Henry Winter Davis: Antebellum and Civil War Congressman from Maryland* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1973), 9, 102-3, 118, 219, 231, 249, 250; Springfield correspondence by John Hay, 10 January, *Missouri Democrat* (St. Louis), 12 January 1861; Michael Thomas Smith, “The Meanest Man in Lincoln’s Cabinet: A Reappraisal of Montgomery Blair,” *Maryland Historical Magazine* 95 (2000): 190-209.

<sup>249</sup> Lyman Trumbull to Lincoln, Washington, 17 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Benjamin F. Wade to Preston King, Jefferson, Ohio, 20 November 1860; John A. Gurley to Lincoln, 31 December 1860; Francis S. Corkran to Lincoln, 31 December 1860; William Dennison to Lincoln, 7 January 1861; Ichabod Goodwin and W. H. Hackett to Lincoln, Concord, 31 January 1861; John C.

opposed Blair, for he was a former Democrat who, along with his father and brother, had worked hard at Chicago to defeat the Sage of Auburn.<sup>250</sup> Radicals in the Free State, however, opposed both Blair and Davis and favored Judge William L. Marshall.<sup>251</sup> On Christmas eve, Lincoln told Trumbull that he expected “to be able to offer Mr. Blair a place in the cabinet; but I can not, as yet, be committed on the matter, to any extent whatever.”<sup>252</sup>

Henry Winter Davis, who enjoyed the backing of Indianans like governor-elect Henry S. Lane and John D. Defrees as well as leading New York newspapers and dozens of his colleagues in the U.S. House, had alienated some Maryland Republicans by campaigning for Bell in the presidential election.<sup>253</sup> Congressman John Covode warned Lincoln that “Davis has scarcely enough of firmness for the times,” while Frank Blair complained that Davis “is not a Republican and has no sympathy with our party.”<sup>254</sup> Davis refused to lobby on his own behalf, arguing that “Mr. Lincoln must be left free & keep himself free – or he will make shipwreck of himself and the Govt.”<sup>255</sup>

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Fremont to Lincoln, 22 February 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Preston King to Lyman Trumbull, Ogdensburgh, 15 November 1860, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>250</sup> Smith, Blair Family, 1:473; Francis P. Blair Sr. to Francis P. Blair Jr., Washington, 6 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>251</sup> Worthington G. Snethen to William P. Fessenden, Baltimore, 28 November 1860, Fessenden Papers, Clements Library, University of Michigan.

<sup>252</sup> Lincoln to Lyman Trumbull Springfield, 24 December 1860, Basler, ed. Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:162.

<sup>253</sup> Henig, Davis, 141; Henry S. Lane to Lincoln, Washington, 25 February 1861; John D. Defrees to Lincoln, 8 January 1861; petition from sixty-nine congressmen, 25 February 1861; John T. Graham to Lincoln, Baltimore, 10 November 1860; Worthington G. Snethen to Lincoln, Baltimore, 21 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Snethen to Lyman Trumbull, Baltimore, 21 November 1860, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Smith, Blair Family, 1:487-89.

<sup>254</sup> John Covode to Lincoln, Washington, 16 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress; Frank Blair to Henry L. Dawes, St. Louis, 9 February 1861, Dawes Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>255</sup> Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis du Pont, [Washington], 20 February 1861, transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

Lincoln postponed a final decision on the five unfilled cabinet positions till he could meet with congressional leaders in person. He also delayed his trip to the capital. Many people, including Seward, feared -- with some reason -- that disunionists were plotting to disrupt the count of the electoral vote and seize the capital.<sup>256</sup> When Seward urged him to come to Washington early, Lincoln declined, explaining that in his view the inauguration “is not the most dangerous point for us. Our adversaries have us more clearly at disadvantage, on the second Wednesday of February, when the [electoral college] votes should be officially counted [in Congress]. If the two Houses refuse to meet at all, or meet without a quorum of each, where shall we be? I do not think that this counting is constitutionally essential to the election; but how are we to proceed in absence of it?”<sup>257</sup> So he determined to remain in Springfield until February 11, when he would begin a circuitous, two-week train journey to the capital. He understandably feared that after reaching Washington “he could have no time to himself.”<sup>258</sup>

Anticipating that violence might disrupt his inauguration, Lincoln cultivated Winfield Scott, highest ranking officer of the U.S. Army.<sup>259</sup> When the president-elect asked Simon Cameron to consult with that general about assuring a safe inauguration, the Chief replied: “I have seen Genl. Scott, who bid me say he will be glad to act under your orders, in all ways to preserve the Union. He says Mr Buchanan, at last, has called on him

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<sup>256</sup> Fred Nicklason, “The Secession Winter and the Committee of Five,” *Pennsylvania History* 38 (1971): 378-86; Margaret Leech, *Reveille in Washington, 1860-1865* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), 27-32; Potter, *Lincoln and His Party*, 255-56; Stamp, *And the War Came*, 257; Baltimore correspondence, 11 January, *New York Tribune*, 16 January 1861.

<sup>257</sup> Lincoln to Seward, Springfield, 3 January 1861, Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Lincoln*, 4:170; Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 28 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>258</sup> Lyman Trumbull reported this to Preston King. King to John Bigelow, Washington, 21 December 1860, John Bigelow, *Retrospections of an Active Life* (5 vols.; New York: Baker & Taylor., 1909-13), 1:318.

<sup>259</sup> Potter, *Lincoln and His Party*, 256-57, 263.



to see that order shall be preserved at the inauguration in this District. That, for this purpose, he has ordered here 2 companies of flying artillery; and that he will organize the militia – and have himself sworn in as a constable. The old warrior is roused, and he will be equal to the occasion.”<sup>260</sup> (Buchanan evidently gave Scott full authority to do whatever was necessary to assure a peaceful transition on March 4.)<sup>261</sup> On January 4, Scott assured Lincoln that all would be well: “The President elect may rely, with confidence, on Genl. S's utmost exertions in the service of his country (the Union) both before & after the approaching inauguration.”<sup>262</sup> Perhaps because the general hailed from Virginia, Lincoln felt the need for further reassurance of his trustworthiness and loyalty. So the president-elect dispatched Thomas S. Mather, adjutant general of Illinois, to consult with Scott. In the capital, Old Fuss and Feathers urged Mather to tell the president-elect: “I shall expect him to come on to Washington as soon as he is ready. Say to him also that, when once here, I shall consider myself responsible for his safety. If necessary, I shall plant cannon at both ends of Pennsylvania Avenue, and if any of the Maryland or Virginia gentlemen who have become so threatening and troublesome of late show their heads or even venture to raise a finger, I shall blow them to hell!”<sup>263</sup> This report ended Lincoln’s doubts about Scott, whose arrangements for the inauguration enjoyed the president-elect’s

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<sup>260</sup> Simon Cameron to Lincoln, Washington, 3 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>261</sup> Leonard Swett to Lincoln, 4 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>262</sup> Scott to Lincoln, Washington 4 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>263</sup> Jesse W. Weik, “How Lincoln Was Convinced of General Scott’s Loyalty,” Century Magazine, February 1911, 594. Scott “said that he would never survive the Union[.] he had fought for fifty years under the stars and stripes and under the same colors he would die[.] The old veteran’s eye flashed liked like fire when he spoke of disunionists.” Mather to Richard Yates, Washington, 29 January 1861, Yates Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

“implicit confidence.”<sup>264</sup> At Lincoln’s behest, Mather also solicited the opinion of army officers about the selection of a secretary of war.<sup>265</sup>

Since Lincoln would not be at the center of power during the crucial weeks when the Cotton States were pulling out of the Union, Seward took it upon himself to keep the country intact at least until inauguration day.<sup>266</sup> To those urging him to back the Crittenden Compromise, he replied that it would be politically suicidal and insisted that “you must let me save the Union in my own way.”<sup>267</sup> He viewed himself as indispensable; if he were away from Washington for only three days, he predicted, “this Administration, the Congress, and the District would fall into consternation and despair. I am the only hopeful, calm, conciliatory person here.”<sup>268</sup> He asserted that “the majority of those around him were determined to pull the house down & he was determined not to let them.”<sup>269</sup> Both Buchanan and Lincoln, he crowed, “unite in devolving on me the responsibility of averting . . . disasters.”<sup>270</sup> He had, he said, “assumed a sort of dictatorship for defense.”<sup>271</sup> He envisioned his role as that of commander-in-chief; in mid-January he told his wife: “I hope what I have done will bring some good fruits, and, in any case, clear my own conscience of responsibility, if, indeed, I am to engage in

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<sup>264</sup> Springfield correspondence [by Richard J. McCormick], 28 January, New York Evening Post, 1 February 1861.

<sup>265</sup> Keyes, journal, entry for 29 January 1861, in E. D. Keyes, Fifty Years’ Observations of Men and Events, Civil and Military (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1884), 360-61.

<sup>266</sup> Daniel Crofts, “Secession Winter: William Henry Seward and the Decision for War,” New York History 65 (1984): 229-56; Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 251-75; Bancroft, Seward, 2:11-45; Van Deusen, Seward, 238-50.

<sup>267</sup> Washington correspondence by Henry Adams, 31 January, Boston Daily Advertiser, 2 February 1861.

<sup>268</sup> Seward to his wife, Washington, 18 January 1861, Seward, ed., Seward at Washington, 2:497.

<sup>269</sup> Charles Francis Adams, Jr., to Richard Henry Dana, Washington, 28 February 1861, Dana Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>270</sup> Seward to Weed, Washington, 23 January 1861, Seward, ed., Seward at Washington, 2:497.

<sup>271</sup> Seward to his wife, Washington, 3 January 1861, Seward, ed., Seward at Washington, 2:491.

conducting a war against a portion of the American people.”<sup>272</sup> Henry Adams regarded Seward as the “virtual ruler of this country.”<sup>273</sup> Adams’s father agreed, writing in mid-January that “Seward is even now the guiding hand at the helm.”<sup>274</sup> When Seward spoke in favor of conciliation, the public assumed that he reflected Lincoln’s views. But, as the president-elect told a visitor in early February, “Seward made all his speeches without consulting him.”<sup>275</sup> Instead of acting as Lincoln’s agent, the senator served as an independent negotiator between the president-elect and representatives of the Upper South and the Border States, whose loyalty was essential if the Union was to be preserved.<sup>276</sup>

Seward calculated that time would heal the sectional wounds. According to his friend Lord Lyons, Britain’s minister to the U.S., “Mr. Seward’s real view of the state of the country appears to be that if bloodshed can be avoided until the new government is installed, the seceding States will in no long time return to the Confederation. He seems to think that in a few months the evils and hardships produced by secession will become intolerably grievous to the Southern States, that they will be completely reassured as to the intentions of the Administration, and that the Conservative element which is now kept under the surface by violent pressure of the Secessionists will emerge with irresistible force. From all these causes he confidently expects that when elections are held in the Southern States in November next, the Union party will have a clear majority and will

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<sup>272</sup> Seward to his wife, Washington, 18 January 1861, Seward, ed., Seward at Washington, 2:496.

<sup>273</sup> Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Washington, 17 January 1861, J. C. Levenson, ed., The Letters of Henry Adams (6 vols.; Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1982-1988), 1:223.

<sup>274</sup> Charles Francis Adams diary, 15 January 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>275</sup> Carl Schurz to his wife, Springfield, 9 February 1861, Intimate Letters of Carl Schurz, 1841-1869, ed. Joseph Schafer (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1929), 247.

<sup>276</sup> Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 195-214, 221-53; Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 280-314.

bring the seceding States back into the Confederation. He then hopes to place himself at the head of a strong Union party, having extensive ramifications both in the North and in the South, and to make ‘Union’ or ‘Disunion’ not ‘Freedom’ or ‘Slavery’ the watchword of political parties.”<sup>277</sup>

In late December, Seward introduced four resolutions in the Committee of Thirteen, but they were not the ones that Lincoln had asked Weed to pass along to him with the recommendation that “that you substantially adopt his views.”<sup>278</sup> Unlike the president-elect, Seward called for a guarantee of slavery in the states where it already existed. Moreover, he failed to include Lincoln’s affirmation that the Union must be preserved, as well as his support for federal enforcement of the fugitive slave provision of the Constitution and his suggestion that private citizens be exempted from the requirement to assist slave catchers.<sup>279</sup> Seward reported to the president-elect that his Republican colleagues on the Committee of Thirteen, along with Senators Trumbull and Fessenden, objected to Lincoln’s resolutions because “the ground has already been covered” and that they “would divide our friends, not only in the committee, but in Congress,” many of whom believed that the rendition of fugitive slaves was a state and not a federal responsibility.<sup>280</sup> (Hamlin, who had been asked to pass judgment on the resolutions, found them unobjectionable.)<sup>281</sup> But Seward, like his boss-to-be, did reject any compromise on slavery expansion, which the South was demanding. (The territorial

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<sup>277</sup> Lyons to Earl Russell, Washington, 4 February 1861, James J. Barnes and Patricia P. Barnes, eds., The American Civil War Through British Eyes: Dispatches by British Diplomats, November 1860-April 1862 (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2003), 28.

<sup>278</sup> Weed to Seward, Albany, 9 January 1861, Seward Papers, University of Rochester.

<sup>279</sup> Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 172-76.

<sup>280</sup> Seward to Lincoln, [Washington], 26 December 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>281</sup> Hamlin to Trumbull, Hampden, Maine, 27 December 1860, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

question lay at the heart of the Crittenden Compromise and its toned-down variant, the Border State plan.)<sup>282</sup> Thus any hopes of compromise seemed doomed in the senate.

The House devised an alternative to the Crittenden and Border State panaceas. On December 20, Henry Winter Davis metaphorically fired “a cannon shot clear through the line” with a proposal to admit the New Mexico Territory, which had adopted a slave code in 1859, thus finessing the vexed question of slavery in territories south of 36° 30’.<sup>283</sup> (The residents could adopt a constitution outlawing slavery.) This suggestion was taken up by the House Committee of Thirty-Three, where some Southerners, “starting as if a bomb-shell had fallen among them,” quickly rejected it.<sup>284</sup> Not deterred, chairman Thomas Corwin and another influential member, Charles Francis Adams (known as the “Archbishop of Antislavery”), bundled it together with a constitutional amendment guaranteeing the security of slavery in the states where it already existed.<sup>285</sup> Seward, who was a close friend of Adams and a frequent caller at his house, probably persuaded the Massachusetts congressman to introduce an amendment that the New Yorker himself

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<sup>282</sup> Devised by a caucus of fourteen Representatives from the Border States and Upper South in late December and early January (there were twenty-three Southern Representatives of Whiggish views who belonged to what was variously called the Opposition, the Americans, or the Constitutional Unionists), this proposal modified the Crittenden compromise in several ways. It did not apply to territory to be added in the future; it forbade Congress and territorial legislatures from tampering with slavery below 36° 30’; instead of a series of constitutional amendments, it called for only one, outlawing interference with the peculiar institution wherever it had already taken root. The federal government was not required to protect slavery in the territories, nor was it permitted to interfere with it. The border state plan further protected slavery in the District of Columbia and called for the modification of the Fugitive Slave Act to render personal liberty laws unnecessary. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 201.

<sup>283</sup> Charles Francis Adams diary, 12 December 1860, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. Davis also proposed the admission of Kansas and that any new territory could only be acquired with the consent of two-thirds of Congress, with the understanding that the status of slavery would remain unchanged in such territories. Henig, *Davis*, 145-46; Potter, *Lincoln and His Party*, 290-91.

<sup>284</sup> Henry Adams, “The Great Secession Winter,” in George Hochfield, ed., *The Great Secession Winter of 1860-61 and Other Essays by Henry Adams* (New York: Sagamore Press, 1958), 18.

<sup>285</sup> Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates*, 204. Corwin devised the sobriquet for Adams. Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Washington, 26 December 1860, in Levenson, ed., *Letters of Henry Adams*, 1:213.

wrote.<sup>286</sup> Believing that the slavery issue had been “substantially settled by the late election,” Adams took the lead in championing this package, which antislavery militants denounced, calling the Massachusetts congressman a traitor to the cause.<sup>287</sup> In the Committee of Thirty-Three, nine of fifteen Republicans voting supported the admission of New Mexico with the understanding that it might become a slave state. One opponent, who believed that “Peon Slavery” in New Mexico was “worse than African Slavery,” bitterly remarked that the Republicans would for their efforts “only get nicely b[ull]shit.”<sup>288</sup> Southern hotheads “could not conceal their vexation,” but Southern Moderates were temporarily placated by this compromise, which demonstrated that the North could offer something positive instead of merely objecting to the Crittenden and Border State plans.<sup>289</sup> For the time being at least, the Upper South would not cast its lot with the Cotton States.<sup>290</sup> Adams and Seward had achieved their short-term goal, driving a wedge between the Upper South and the Deep South and buying time to allow for the

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<sup>286</sup> R. Alton Lee, “The Corwin Amendment in the Secession Crisis,” *Ohio Historical Quarterly* 70 (1961): 19. The wording of the amendment in its final form, which Congress adopted, is virtually identical to that of Seward’s proposal in the Committee of Thirteen. Adams said that Seward had proposed it in that committee. Charles Francis Adams diary, 22 December 1860, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society. For unknown reasons, James Dixon claimed to “have very good reason to believe that Charles F. Adams has not acted without knowing Lincoln’s views.” Dixon to Mark Howard, Washington, 2 January 1861, Howard Papers, Connecticut Historical Society.

<sup>287</sup> Adams to Richard Henry Dana, Washington, 9 February 1861, Dana Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Duberman, *Charles Francis Adams*, 241-42; F. W. Bird to Charles Francis Adams, East Walpole, 14 February 1861, and A. G. Brown to Charles Francis Adams, Boston, 27 February 1861; Charles Francis Adams diary, 1 January 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; John Jay to Charles Sumner, Katonah, N.Y., 31 December 1860; Edward L. Pierce to Sumner, Boston, 31 December 1860 and 8 January 1861, Sumner Papers, Harvard University.

<sup>288</sup> Mason Tappan to George G. Fogg, Washington, 30 December 1860, Tappan Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

<sup>289</sup> Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis du Pont, [Washington], 18 December 1860, transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware; Washington correspondence by Henry Adams, 28 December 1860, Boston *Daily Advertiser*, 1 January 1861.

<sup>290</sup> Sowle, “The Conciliatory Republicans,” 8, 216-17; Potter, *Lincoln and His Party*, 294-96; Adams, “Secession Winter,” 21.

inauguration of Lincoln with most Slave States still in the Union.<sup>291</sup> Throughout January and into February, Congress tried valiantly to blend the Border State and the Davis-Adams-Corwin schemes.<sup>292</sup>

Meanwhile Seward publicly championed a different plan. In a major speech on January 12, he shocked Radical Republicans by urging immediate concessions to keep the Upper South from seceding and offering a long-range proposal to settle the differences between the sections. When the Sage of Auburn spoke, the atmosphere in the senate chamber, packed with 2000 spectators, was tense. Three days earlier, South Carolina authorities had fired on an unarmed ship, the Star of the West, laden with supplies for the Fort Sumter garrison. (Upon hearing this news, Lincoln was, like many other Northerners, “greatly exercised.”)<sup>293</sup> The nation seemed to tremble on the brink of war. Could Seward keep the peace? After extolling the advantages of the Union for all sections, including the South, the senator in conciliatory tones endorsed the creation of two huge new states, one slave and one free, out of the existing western territories; a constitutional amendment guaranteeing slavery where it already existed; a modification of the Fugitive Slave Act exempting bystanders from any role in the pursuit of runaways; and a law forbidding invasions of one state by residents of another. He also recommended a cooling-off period of two or three years, to be followed by a national constitutional convention.<sup>294</sup> “It is the speech of an adroit politician rather than of a great

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<sup>291</sup> Seward to Weed, Washington, 23 January 1861, Seward, ed., Seward at Washington, 2:497; Stamp, And the War Came, 173-75.

<sup>292</sup> Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 204-6.

<sup>293</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 10 January, Cincinnati Commercial, 11 January 1861.

<sup>294</sup> George E. Baker, ed., The Works of William H. Seward (5 vols.; Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1884) 4:651-69; Van Deusen, Seward, 244-45; Bancroft, Seward, 2:12-16; Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 285-88;

statesman,” wrote New York Congressman Charles B. Sedgwick; it afforded “skulking ground for those who wish to dodge and compromise,” offered a reward “for rascality and treachery,” and “has hurt Seward and shaken the confidence of many of his strongest friends.”<sup>295</sup> The editor of the Washington Constitution asserted that “Seward’s speech fell like a pall over the entire community. When he finished speaking all hope seemed to have fled, and even Mr. Crittenden despaired.”<sup>296</sup> The leading Radical in the U.S. House, Thaddeus Stevens, confessed himself “mortified and discouraged” by Seward’s backsliding.<sup>297</sup> It was reported that while “practical men, smarting under the return of the Star of the West, think it not strong, too cool, too calm,” Radicals “feel that it yields too much” and “are suspicious of one who will yield so much to evil.”<sup>298</sup>

Though Lincoln reportedly was “not overpleased with Seward’s speech,” he told the senator that it “is well received here; and, I think, is doing good all over the country.”<sup>299</sup> In Springfield it was widely believed that Lincoln “would have made a much less general and more positive and decided effort had he been in Seward’s place.”<sup>300</sup> The Illinois State Journal praised the address, noting that a constitutional convention “will take time, and time is all that is necessary to cure the secession fever.” Seward, said the

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Washington correspondence, 13 January, New York Tribune, 14 January 1861; Washington correspondence by Henry Adams, 18 January, Boston Daily Advertiser, 22 January 1861.

<sup>295</sup> Charles B. Sedgwick to Israel Washburn, Washington, 25 January 1861, Gaillard Hunt, Israel, Elihu and Cadwallader Washburn: A Chapter in American Biography (New York: Macmillan, 1925), 91.

<sup>296</sup> William M. Browne to S. L. M. Barlow, Washington 14 January 1861, Barlow Papers, Huntington Library, San Marino, California.

<sup>297</sup> Stevens to Chase, Washington, 3 February 1861, Beverly Wilson Palmer, ed., The Selected Papers of Thaddeus Stevens (2 vols.; Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1997-98), 1:200.

<sup>298</sup> Mrs. George Schuyler to [Henry W. Bellows], n. p., n.d., Bellows Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>299</sup> George G. Fogg to Gideon Welles, Cincinnati, 27 January 1861, Welles Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; Lincoln to Seward, Springfield, 19 January 1861, Basler, ed. Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:176.

<sup>300</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 18 January, New York Herald, 23 January 1861.



editors, “thinks that time will settle the matter – that reason will return, and secession will die.”<sup>301</sup> Lincoln shared that view, as John Hay reported in the Missouri Democrat: “I have reason to believe that he coincides with Gov. Seward in favoring a convention of the people to suggest amendments to the Constitution. Conscious of nothing in his acts or sentiments which should justly excite alarm, he will insist upon his quiet inauguration, without further assurances on his part; but when once at the head of the nation, those who are laboring for peace with singleness of heart, will never find their plans balked by any factious opposition from him.”<sup>302</sup>

The president-elect indirectly backed the call for a national convention to revise the Constitution. Republicans in the Illinois General Assembly were eager to do something about the secession crisis but unsure what to recommend. On January 16, Norman B. Judd anxiously reported that “we are having trouble in holding them steady.”<sup>303</sup> Their counterparts in other Northern states had recently passed resolutions offering to help the federal government put down secession.<sup>304</sup> To give the legislators some concession that they could support, Judd asked Salmon P. Chase for suggestions and comments on pair of resolutions that the Illinois legislature might consider. They had been drafted by Lincoln, who summoned Republican leaders to discuss them. Judd objected that it was too early to move, for it might appear that Lincoln was applying undue pressure to have such a Peace Conference assemble. Lincoln disagreed but gave

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<sup>301</sup> “Mr. Seward’s Speech,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 6 February 1861.

<sup>302</sup> Springfield correspondence, 19 January, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 21 January 1861, in Michael Burlingame, ed., Lincoln’s Journalist: John Hay’s Anonymous Writings for the Press, 1860-1864 (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 19.

<sup>303</sup> Judd to Chase, Springfield, 16 January 1861, Chase Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>304</sup> Stamp, And the War Came, 92-93.

the resolutions to State Senator Thomas A. Marshall with instructions to introduce them whenever Judd thought it advisable.<sup>305</sup>

Lincoln's resolutions read as follows: "Whereas in and by the 5<sup>th</sup> Art[icle] of the Const[itution] of the U.S. provision is made for proposing amendments to that instrument either by Congress or by a Convention; and whereas at the present time it would seem that Congress is unable to agree upon amendments to be proposed; and whereas there is sufficient anxiety in the public mind upon the subject to justify and require the same to be submitted to the people. Therefore Resolved by the legislature of the State of Illinois that application be made and the same is hereby made to Congress to call a Convention in accordance with the Constitutional provisions aforesaid to propose amendments to the Constitution of the U.S." To balance this conciliatory gesture, a firm Unionist resolution was added to it: "Resolved that until the people of the United S[tates] shall otherwise direct, the present Federal Union must be preserved as it is; and the present Constitution and laws must be administered as they are; and to secure these objects the whole resources of the State of Illinois are hereby pledged to the Federal authorities."<sup>306</sup> Despite Chase's objections, the Illinois legislature adopted the resolutions in February.<sup>307</sup>

Though the reaction to Seward's address was generally positive, the New Yorker knew that he must win over Lincoln for any compromise. To this end he enlisted the aid of Illinois Congressman William Kellogg, who visited Springfield on January 20.<sup>308</sup> To

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<sup>305</sup> Arthur Edwards, Sketch of the Life of Norman B. Judd (Chicago: Horton and Leonard, 1878), 11.

<sup>306</sup> Judd to Chase, Springfield, 16 January 1861, Chase Papers, Library of Congress. These resolutions resembled those passed by other states.

<sup>307</sup> Chase to Judd, Columbus, 20 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress. The text of the adopted resolutions differs slightly from the document Judd sent to Chase.

<sup>308</sup> Kellogg came out to Springfield with James K. Moorhead and Alexander Cummings. Springfield correspondence by D., 21 January, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 22 January 1861. Missouri Democratic

Kellogg's appeal for concessions on the territorial issue, Lincoln emphatically replied that he would endorse no measure betraying the Chicago Platform, but he did indicate that if the American people wished to call a convention dealing with Southern grievances, he would not object. During his meeting with Kellogg, Lincoln received a dispatch from Trumbull urging him to do nothing until he received letters that the senator was forwarding from Washington. The president-elect informed Kellogg that he would honor the senator's request and then write to Seward explaining his position on compromise measures.<sup>309</sup>

Frustrated yet again, Seward sank into depression.<sup>310</sup> In late January, he warned Lincoln that compromise was necessary to prevent the Upper South from seceding: "The appeals from the Union men in the Border states for something of concession or compromise are very painful since they say that without it those states must all go with the tide, and your administration must begin with the free states, meeting all the Southern states in a hostile confederacy. Chance might render the separation perpetual. Disunion has been contemplated and discussed so long there that they have become frightfully familiar with it, and even such men as Mr Scott and William C. Rives are so far disunionists as to think that they would have the right and be wise – in going if we will not execute new guaranties which would be abhorrent in the North. It is almost in vain that I tell them to wait, let us have a truce on slavery, put our issue on Disunion and seek remedies for ultimate griefs in a constitutional question." Seward predicted that "you are

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Congressman John S. Phelps, a fellow member of the Committee of Thirty-Three, also urged Kellogg to lobby Lincoln. Phelps to Samuel Treat, Washington, 22 January 1861, Treat Papers, Missouri Historical Society.

<sup>309</sup> New York Herald, 28 January 1861; Lincoln to Seward, Springfield, 1 February 1861, Basler, ed. Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:183.

<sup>310</sup> Sowle, "The Conciliatory Republicans," 300-1; Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 306-7.

– to meet a hostile armed confederacy when you commence– You must reduce it by force or conciliation– The resort to force would very soon be denounced by the North, although so many are anxious for a fray. The North will not consent to a long civil war– A large portion, much the largest portion of the Republican party are reckless now of the crisis before us – and compromise or concession though as a means of averting dissolution is intolerable to them. They believe that either it will not come at all, or be less disastrous than I think it will be– For my own part I think that we must collect the revenues – regain the forts in the gulf and, if need be maintain ourselves here– But that every thought that we think ought to be conciliatory forbearing and patient, and so open the way for the rising of a Union Party in the seceding states which will bring them back into the Union.”<sup>311</sup>

Seward’s admonition was well taken, for he accurately gauged Southern public opinion. But, ironically, he misjudged the mood in his own section. The North, he feared, would shatter into bickering factions once war broke out, making it impossible to restore the Union by force; hence everything must be done to prevent hostilities. Lincoln may have overestimated the depth and extent of Southern Unionism, but he understood Northern opinion better than Seward did.<sup>312</sup>

Despite Seward’s desperate plea, Lincoln refused to budge on the central issue. On February 1, reiterating his earlier opposition to compromise, he told the New Yorker that “on the territorial question – that is, the question of extending slavery under the national auspices, – I am inflexible. I am for no compromise which assists or permits the extension of the institution on soil owned by the nation. And any trick by which the

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<sup>311</sup> Seward to Lincoln, Washington, 27 January 1861, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>312</sup> Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 290, 356-58.

nation is to acquire territory, and then allow some local authority to spread slavery over it, is as obnoxious as any other. I take it that to effect some such result as this, and to put us again on the high-road to a slave empire is the object of all these proposed compromises. I am against it.” Changing his tone, Lincoln closed with a startling concession: “As to fugitive slaves, District of Columbia, slave trade among the slave states, and whatever springs of necessity from the fact that the institution is amongst us, I care but little, so that what is done be comely, and not altogether outrageous. Nor do I care much about New-Mexico, if further extension were hedged against.”<sup>313</sup>

Lincoln’s rather casual statement about New Mexico represented a momentous policy shift. Three weeks earlier Villard had reported that the president-elect “does not approve of the advocacy by certain Republican Congressmen of the scheme of admitting New Mexico as a state with its territorial slave code unimpaired. His faith in the Chicago dogma of the right of Congressional prohibition of slavery in the territories is as firm as ever.”<sup>314</sup> But soon thereafter, Lincoln told visitors who had inquired about plans to restore the Missouri Compromise line “that although the recent presidential election was a verdict of the people in favor of freedom upon all the territories, yet personally he would be willing, for the sake of the Union, to divide the territory we now own by that line, if in the judgment of the nation it would save the Union and restore harmony. But whether the acquisition of territory hereafter would not re-open the question and renew the strife, was a question to be thought of and in some way provided against.” When asked if he would recommend repeal of personal liberty laws, he “replied that he had never read one of them, but that if they were of the character ascribed to them by

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<sup>313</sup> Lincoln to Seward, Springfield, 1 February 1861, Basler, ed., Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:183.

<sup>314</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 6 January, New York Herald, 10 January 1861.

Southern men, they certainly ought to be repealed. Whether as President of the United States he ought to interfere with State legislation by Presidential recommendation, required more thought than he had yet given the subject.” As for the right of holding slaves in federal dockyards and arsenals, he said “the subject has not entered my mind.” Unconvincingly he likewise denied that he had given any thought to the abolition of slavery in the nation’s capital. He added that it “was sometimes better for a man to pay a debt he did not owe, or to lose a demand which was a just one, than to go to law about it.”<sup>315</sup> On January 24, the Illinois State Journal seemed to endorse the admission of New Mexico with its slave code: “if the Southern people fear or believe that the Republican party are opposed to the admission of any more slave States, we are willing that it should be made the law or the Constitution that Territories applying for admission into the Union, shall be admitted with or without slavery, as the people of such Territory, so applying, shall determine.”<sup>316</sup> But, the paper counseled, any concession should be accompanied by a demand that the Slave States explicitly renounce the doctrine of secession.<sup>317</sup> A few days earlier, Lincoln reportedly had told a prominent Illinois politician that the Border States’ propositions “would only be worth noticing in case a proposition for a Constitutional amendment requiring the consent of two-thirds of all the States to any additional acquisitions of territory, should be incorporated.”

There were other indications that Lincoln would support compromise measures. In November, a Mississippi planter who spoke with him reported that the president-elect “was opposed to any interference with slavery in the states, or with the inter-state slave

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<sup>315</sup> “Interview with Lincoln,” Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 8 January 1861

<sup>316</sup> “Concession and Compromise,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 24 January 1861; Illinois State Register (Springfield), 25, 29 January 1861.

<sup>317</sup> “What We Need Most,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 26 January 1861.

trade; that he was opposed to abolishing or interfering with slavery in the district of Columbia; and that he was only opposed to its extension in the territories, but added, ‘that was only an opinion of his.’” As for appointing postmasters and other federal officials in South Carolina if it seceded, he “stated that if no one would accept office in that state, of course they could receive no benefits from the government, and the whole expenses for the distribution of the mails would devolve on her own citizens.”<sup>318</sup> In late January, the Illinois State Journal spoke of the North’s wish for peace: “There is no intention in the loyal states to invade and conquer the states which have rebelled. They might undoubtedly be subdued by the superior force of the United States, but their forcible subjugation would answer no good end. All that is contemplated is to make them obey the laws relating to foreign intercourse.”<sup>319</sup> The Illinois State Register marveled at the Journal’s abrupt turn away from confrontation toward conciliation.<sup>320</sup>

It is hard to know why Lincoln shifted his stance on New Mexico. Perhaps he believed that slavery could never take root in that huge territory, which included what would later become the states of Arizona and New Mexico. The 1860 census showed no slaves lived there.

Lincoln’s change of heart could perhaps have averted bloodshed if Seward had exploited it and if Southern Unionists would have accepted the New Mexico scheme. Radicals viewed that as the most dangerous compromise proposal, for it might pass.<sup>321</sup>

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<sup>318</sup> Chattanooga Gazette, n.d., copied in the New York World, 28 November 1860.

<sup>319</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), n.d., quoted in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 1 February 1861.

<sup>320</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), 1 February 1861.

<sup>321</sup> Charles Sumner to John A. Andrew, Washington, 8, 10 February 1861, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society; Dwight Loomis to Joseph R. Hawley, Washington, 31 January 1861, Hawley Papers, Library of Congress.

But nothing came of it, for Seward failed to act on Lincoln's new position regarding New Mexico statehood. Curiously, Henry Adams later wrote that Seward, Adams, Davis, John Sherman, and other Republican conciliators lobbied hard for the New Mexico plan but were unsuccessful because "the mass of the party hesitated, and turned for the decisive word to the final authority at Springfield. The word did not come."<sup>322</sup> But in fact it did come.

Seward's behavior is one of the great mysteries of the secession crisis. If he had informed House and senate Republicans that Lincoln supported the New Mexico Compromise, they would not have lamented, as John Sherman did on February 9, that "we are powerless here because we don't know what Lincoln wants. As he is to have the Executive power we can't go further than he approves. He communicates nothing even to his friends here & so we drift along."<sup>323</sup> (Two weeks earlier, Henry Adams observed: "Lincoln's position is not known, but his course up to this time has shown his utter ignorance of the right way to act, so far as his appointments go. It is said, too, here [in Washington], that he is not a strong man.")<sup>324</sup> When a bill providing for New Mexico statehood finally came up on March 1, most Republicans voted to table it, which was done.<sup>325</sup>

Perhaps Seward feared that Southern Moderates would accept nothing less than a guarantee that slavery be allowed to expand into territory south of 36° 30'.<sup>326</sup> He had

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<sup>322</sup> Adams, "Secession Winter," 25.

<sup>323</sup> Sherman to Frank Blair, Washington, 9 February 1861, Blair Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>324</sup> Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Washington, 24 January 1861, Levenson, ed., Letters of Henry Adams, 1:225.

<sup>325</sup> Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 301-2.

<sup>326</sup> Washington correspondence by James Shepard Pike, 22 January, New York Tribune, 24 January 1861; Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 234-43. It is possible that Lincoln wrote Seward another letter, no longer



good reason to think so, for when the New Mexico Compromise was before the House Committee of Thirty-Three, only two Southern members supported it. But in late January, James Shepherd Pike reported from Washington “it is now believed that the Secession movement can be arrested there [in Virginia and Kentucky] on the basis of Mr. Adams’s proposition.”<sup>327</sup> A month later, the Washington correspondent of the New York Times asserted that the only thing necessary “to secure the loyalty of the Border States, and pave the way for the adjustment of our sectional differences, is the passage of an Enabling act for New-Mexico, authorizing that Territory to form a State Government.” He thought such a measure involved no surrender of principle and would pass.<sup>328</sup> On March 1, Democrats supported statehood for New Mexico, voting 45-39 against a motion to table a bill granting it.<sup>329</sup> Allegedly Seward had been telling stiff-backs that he only paid lip service to schemes like the New Mexico Compromise and “had no idea of bringing them forward” since “there were not three men on our side in the Senate who would support them.”<sup>330</sup> But surely if Lincoln’s approval had been made known, many Republicans would have backed a measure championed by him and by the “Antislavery Archbishop,” Charles Francis Adams. On December 29, nine of the fifteen Republicans on the Committee of Thirty-Three had voted for it. Seward missed a potential opportunity

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extant, withdrawing his support for the New Mexico Compromise. Sowle, “The Conciliatory Republicans,” 372-73. On February 5, Seward whispered to Charles Francis Adams something that Adams did not perfectly understand, but the “substance seemed to be that he had heard from Mr Lincoln, who approved his course, but was so badgered at Springfield that he felt compelled to keep uncommitted on it at present.” Charles Francis Adams, diary, entry for 5 February 1861, Adams Family Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

<sup>327</sup> Washington correspondence by James Shepard Pike, 24 January, New York Tribune, 26 January 1861.

<sup>328</sup> Washington correspondence by Observer, 27 February, New York Times, 1 March 1861.

<sup>329</sup> Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 301.

<sup>330</sup> Seward told this to New Jersey Senator John C. Ten Eyck, who in turn told it to Charles Sumner. Sumner to John A. Andrew, Washington, 18 January 1861, Andrew Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society.

to effect genuine compromise, for a majority of Republicans seemed willing to accept the New Mexico scheme.<sup>331</sup> Lincoln did not again raise the New Mexico plan, which was before the House throughout February. On March 1, the Representatives shelved it, with Republicans voting in favor of the motion to table, 76-26.

The stunning victories achieved by anti-secessionists in Virginia and Tennessee elections on February 4 and 9 led Henry Winter Davis to crow that there the “back of the revolution is broken.”<sup>332</sup> With this turn of events, Seward may well have felt that his job was over and he could calmly await Lincoln’s arrival without further efforts on behalf of compromise.<sup>333</sup> “At least,” said he, “the danger of conflict, here or elsewhere, before the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, has been averted. Time has been gained.”<sup>334</sup> On February 8, Henry Adams reported that “Seward is in high spirits and chuckles himself hoarse with his stories. He says it’s all right. We shall keep the border states, and in three months or thereabouts, if we hold off, the Unionists and Disunionists will have their hands on each others throats in the cotton states. The storm is weathered.”<sup>335</sup> Adams later observed that with the Unionist landslide victory in Virginia, “the country began to wake from its despair. Slowly the great ship seemed to right itself, broken and water-logged it is true, but not wrecked.”<sup>336</sup> Varying that metaphor, Seward wrote his wife in mid-February as Lincoln’s train wended its circuitous way toward the capital: “I am, at last, out of direct responsibility. I have

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<sup>331</sup> Stamp, And the War Came, 165-66.

<sup>332</sup> Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis Du Pont, [Washington], 14 February 1861, transcript, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

<sup>333</sup> Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 309-10.

<sup>334</sup> Unidentified letter in Seward, ed., Seward at Washington, 1:502.

<sup>335</sup> Henry Adams to Charles Francis Adams, Jr., Washington, 8 February 1861, Levenson, ed., Letters of Henry Adams, 1:230.

<sup>336</sup> Adams, “Secession Winter,” 24.

brought the ship off the sands, and am ready to resign the helm into the hands of the Captain whom the people have chosen.”<sup>337</sup> James Shepherd Pike observed that the New Mexico Compromise provided the Southern moderates “a temporary holding-ground during the height of the Secession storm.”<sup>338</sup> Seward deserves credit, for he, with the help of Charles Francis Adams and Henry Winter Davis, among others, had managed to keep the Upper South in the Union, at least temporarily.<sup>339</sup>

Not every compromise supporter thought highly of Seward.<sup>340</sup> When William C. Rives of Virginia, a former senator and minister to France, conferred with him in January, he was dismayed at the New Yorker’s assertion that his “irrepressible conflict” rhetoric was “intended for effect at home, and not designed to reach the ears of the South.” Rives regarded Seward as “a very small man, relying exclusively upon political maneuvering & without the least pretension to true & manly statesmanship.”<sup>341</sup> If Seward had been able to work with Rives, the cause of compromise would have been greatly strengthened.<sup>342</sup>

Others doubted Seward’s statesmanship. Charles Sumner, who was to chair the Senate Foreign Relations Committee throughout the Civil War, called him “only a

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<sup>337</sup> Seward to his wife, [Washington, 15 February 1861], Seward, ed., Seward at Washington, 1:505.

<sup>338</sup> Washington correspondence by James Shepard Pike, 7 January, New York Tribune, 9 January 1861.

<sup>339</sup> Adams, “Secession Winter,” 22-24; Stamp, And the War Came, 20; Sowle, “The Conciliatory Republicans,” 216-17; Potter, Lincoln and His Party, 81-87, 313-14; Crofts, Reluctant Confederates, 356-59; Bancroft, Seward, 2:35-38; Seward to William Schouler, 13 June 1867, in William Schouler, A History of Massachusetts in the Civil War (Boston: E. P. Dutton, 1868-71), 1:41-42.

<sup>340</sup> Nor have historians. His biographer Frederic Bancroft called him “a consummate opportunist” and said that his “irresistible impulse to pose and explain and appear all-wise and all-important earned for him a reputation for insincerity and egotism.” Bancroft, Seward, 2:88, 528. Allan Nevins, commenting on Seward’s conduct during the secession crisis, said “his course had a base aspect in its devious duplicity.” Nevins, The War for the Union (4 vols.; New York: Scribner’s, 1959-1971), 1:59.

<sup>341</sup> William C. Rives to William C. Rives, Jr., 27 January 1861, W. C. Rives Papers, Library of Congress; Sowle, “Conciliatory Republicans,” 353.

<sup>342</sup> Sowle, “Conciliatory Republicans,” 354.

cunning contriver of little plots” and “not a true man.” Sumner had good reason for concluding that the New Yorker “was not frank and straightforward.”<sup>343</sup> In 1859, Jefferson Davis was scandalized when Seward told him that his appeals on behalf of blacks “are potent to affect the rank and file of the North.” Davis then asked if he never spoke “from conviction alone.” The New Yorker replied: “Never.”<sup>344</sup> Montgomery Blair of Maryland thought Seward “a most unsafe public man.” Reminiscing after the Civil War, Blair called Seward “the personification of old Polonius’ politician who ‘by indirection found direction out.’” Nobody, Blair asserted, “has ever associated long with him, who has not heard him recount by the hour his successful political strategy.” To the New Yorker, politics was nothing more than “a harmless game for power.” Blair could not forget how shocked he was when Seward confided “that he was the man who put Archy Dixon . . . up to moving the repeal of the Missouri Compromise,” thus ruining Dixon’s reputation.<sup>345</sup> James Lyons was equally scandalized when Seward told him that he had argued against the annexation of Texas on constitutional grounds only because it would become a Slave State. “If you had given us free territory every man of us would have voted for Texas,” he later acknowledged insouciantly, causing Lyons to write Seward off “as a man destitute of all public principle.”<sup>346</sup> The Russian minister to the U.S., Edouard Stoeckl, was disgusted with Seward, whom he described as an arrogant,

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<sup>343</sup> David Donald, Charles Sumner and the Rights of Man (New York: Knopf, 1970), 20.

<sup>344</sup> Varina Davis, Jefferson Davis, Ex-President of the Confederate States of America: A Memoir by His Wife (2 vols.; New York: Belford, 1890), 1:581.

<sup>345</sup> Montgomery Blair to Gideon Welles, Washington, 17 May 1873, Welles Papers, Library of Congress. For evidence that Seward did put Dixon up to abolishing the Missouri Compromise, see Van Deusen, Seward, 586-87n3.

<sup>346</sup> James Lyons to Allen B. Magruder, White Sulphur Springs, West Virginia, 21 August 1875, Southern Historical Society Papers 7:354-55.

vain, small-time politician and poseur who would listen to advice from no one.<sup>347</sup>

Similarly, George G. Fogg was appalled by Seward's "insolent refusal to even consult on the measures to be adopted" and the "the lordly bearing" that he maintained "towards all the Republican members of the Senate."<sup>348</sup>

By early February, Seward may have felt that the initiative for compromise could now be assumed by the Peace Conference which Virginia had summoned to meet in Washington.<sup>349</sup> He hoped that the conclave, which opened on February 4, would last for weeks and thus postpone any violent sectional clash.<sup>350</sup> All states were invited to send delegates to consider a peaceful solution to the crisis, based on a variation of the Crittenden Compromise.<sup>351</sup>

When the invitation to send delegates to that conclave arrived at Springfield, Lincoln suggested that the legislature take no immediate action. Employing morbid imagery yet again, he said "that he would rather be hung by the neck till he was dead on the steps of the Capitol, before he would buy or beg a peaceful inauguration."<sup>352</sup> The Illinois State Journal was equally emphatic: "She [Virginia] says to us, 'unless you see fit to comply with our terms, we will lead our people to the commission of treason, and

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<sup>347</sup> Edouard de Stoeckl to Alexander Gortchakov, Washington, 23 May 1861, dispatch 35, photocopy, Principal Archive of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russian Reproductions, Papers of the Foreign Copying Project, Library of Congress; Albert A. Woldman, Lincoln and the Russians (Cleveland: World, 1952), 53-54; Frank A. Golder, "The American Civil War through the Eyes of a Russian Diplomat," American Historical Review 26 (1921): 458.

<sup>348</sup> Fogg to Lincoln, Washington, 2 February 1861, draft, Fogg Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

<sup>349</sup> On January 19, the Virginia legislature voted to call such a convention.

<sup>350</sup> Sowle, "The Conciliatory Republicans," 276, 391-92; Henry Adams, "Secession Winter," 24-25.

<sup>351</sup> On the peace conference, see Robert Gray Gunderson, Old Gentlemen's Convention: The Washington Peace Conference of 1861 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1961), and Jesse L. Keene, The Peace Convention of 1861 (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: Confederate Publishing Company, 1961).

<sup>352</sup> William Jayne to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 28 January 1861, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

compel you to coerce us to obedience to the laws.’ She proposes to us that we should adopt the Breckinridge platform as a basis of settlement. Not only this; but she insists that in all territory that may hereafter be acquired, slavery shall be protected by constitutional amendment. That is the proposition. And we can scarcely consider it with that degree of patience its importance would seem to demand. The character of the proposition can find a parallel only in the demand, that Mr. Lincoln having been constitutionally elected, shall resign, and allow tra[i]tors and rebels to fill the offices, which the people have decided, shall be filled by Republicans the next four years. . . . We do not like the idea of buying the right to control the offices which the people have given the Republicans.” To all Southern states urging compromises and concessions, the Journal declared: “we are not aware of having done any wrong to them or their people,” and “we do not propose to make either concession or compromise – if in doing so we are required to yield up any essential principle of Republican faith.”<sup>353</sup>

To his friends Lincoln submitted a draft resolution calling for the governor to appoint representatives to that conference and making it clear that such action was not to be construed as endorsing any form of the Crittenden Compromise. In addition, the delegates were to be guided by instructions from the legislature.<sup>354</sup> When Norman B. Judd advised that it would be premature to submit those resolutions to the General Assembly, Lincoln agreed. Later, after Ohio and New York decided to send delegates, the Illinois legislature followed suit, passing Lincoln’s resolutions in order to help keep

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<sup>353</sup> “The Propositions of Virginia,” Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 30 January 1861.

<sup>354</sup> The text of the resolutions, which were adopted on February 1, can be found in the Illinois State Register (Springfield), 5 February 1861.

“knock kneed” appeasers from dominating the convention.<sup>355</sup> To that end, Governor Yates chose five Republicans as delegates: Stephen T. Logan, former Lieutenant-Governor Gustave Koerner, Burton C. Cook, ex-Congressman Thomas J. Turner, and ex-Governor John Wood, most of whom were Lincoln’s friends.<sup>356</sup> Koerner, thinking no good could come of the conclave, declined and recommended that John M. Palmer be named in his stead. Yates took that advice.<sup>357</sup> When Lincoln received a protest against the appointment of Turner, who allegedly had “neither ability or respectability,” he replied that he “did not think any objection to Turner of enough importance to have a squabble over.”<sup>358</sup> The president-elect told Orville H. Browning that “no good results would follow the border State Convention . . . but evil rather, as increased excitement would follow when it broke up without having accomplished any thing,” and that “no concession by the free States short of a surrender of every thing worth preserving, and contending for would

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<sup>355</sup> William Jayne to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 31 January and 1 February 1861, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Ebenezer Peck to Trumbull, Springfield, 2 February 1861, *ibid.*; Arthur C. 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), 257-58; Trumbull to Richard Yates, Washington, 4 February 1861, in Richard Yates and Catharine Yates Pickering Richard Yates, Civil War Governor, ed. John H. Krenkel (Danville, Illinois: Interstate Printers, 1966), 153-54. Palmer was a substitute for Gustave Koerner, who declined to serve. Koerner, Memoirs, 2:113.

<sup>356</sup> Norman B. Judd, interview with John G. Nicolay, Washington, 28 February 1876, in Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 47-48; Springfield correspondence, 30, 31 January, New York Herald, 7 February 1861; William Jayne to Trumbull, Springfield, 28 January 1861, Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Gunderson, Old Gentlemen’s Convention, 35. Democrats protested the absence of any members of their party. Illinois State Register (Springfield), 2 February 1861; speeches in the state senate, *ibid.*, 30 January, 5, 6 February 1861. Republicans argued that since the Democrats of Illinois had endorsed the Crittenden Compromise, they were not ideal representatives to send to the Peace Conference. Judd declined Yates’s invitation to serve as the head of the delegation. Judd to George G. Fogg, Chicago, 8 February 1861, Fogg Papers, New Hampshire Historical Society.

<sup>357</sup> Koerner, Memoirs, 2:113.

<sup>358</sup> William Jayne to Lyman Trumbull, Springfield, 2 February 1861, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress; Basler, ed. Collected Works of Lincoln, 4:168.

satisfy the South, and that Crittenden[']s proposed amendment to the Constitution in the form proposed ought not to be made.”<sup>359</sup>

In fact, the Peace Conference deliberated for weeks before recommending a variation on the Crittenden Compromise, which Congress rejected.<sup>360</sup> During their deliberations, Republican leaders in Washington awaited Lincoln’s arrival impatiently. The main advantage of the Peace Conference, recalled one Indiana delegate, “was to postpone the commencement of hostilities until after the inauguration of President Lincoln.”<sup>361</sup> Another Indiana delegate explained that he and his fellow Republicans “have thus far done all in our power to procrastinate, and shall continue to do so, in order to remain in Session until after the 4<sup>th</sup> of March, for after the inauguration we shall have an honest fearless man at the helm, and will soon know whether the honest masses of the People desire to preserve and perpetuate our Government.”<sup>362</sup>

Struggling with cabinet selections and compromise schemes, Lincoln suffered agony as Buchanan allowed the Cotton States to seize federal forts, arsenals, custom houses, post offices, and courthouses. In late December, upon hearing a rumor that the president would surrender Fort Moultrie in Charleston harbor, Lincoln snapped: “If that

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<sup>359</sup> Theodore Calvin Pease and James G. Randall, eds., The Diary of Orville Hickman Browning (2 vols.; Springfield: Illinois State Historical Library, 1925-33), 1:453 (9 February 1861). On February 18 in Albany, New York, he said during a conversation “that he regarded the Peace Convention as one of the most dangerous elements in our present crisis. No good would come of it, and when it exploded it would aggravate the whole affair.” Albany correspondence, 18 February, New York Herald, 19 February 1861.

<sup>360</sup> Unlike the Crittenden Compromise, the proposal of the Peace Conference called for the Missouri Compromise line to be applied only to territory then owned by the U.S. It further provided that no territory would be acquired in the future without majority approval by both North and South.

<sup>361</sup> E. W. H. Ellis, “Autobiography of a Pioneer,” Indiana Magazine of History 10 (1914): 70, quoted in Kenneth M. Stampp, “Letters from the Washington Peace Conference of 1861,” Journal of Southern History 9 (1943): 397.

<sup>362</sup> Godlove Orth to Oliver P. Morton, Washington, 7, 13, 21 February 1861, William Dudley Foulke Papers, Indiana State Library, Indianapolis (quote from letter of February 21).



is true, they ought to hang him.”<sup>363</sup> A visitor reported that Lincoln’s “Kentucky blood is up, he means fight. He says he has not yet had time to examine the list of vessels in our navy suitable for the purpose, but he intends to use them all if necessary, for blockading the ports in every seceding State, & the Army to garrison every fort on the coast, from Savannah to New Orleans.”<sup>364</sup> He intended to preserve “the integrity of the Union if it costs blood enough to fill Charleston harbor,” according to Horace White.<sup>365</sup>

Lincoln’s anger was widely shared in the North, where the secessionists’ takeover of U.S. government facilities was regarded as “gigantic robbery.” Such wholesale theft undermined support for compromise measures.<sup>366</sup> Even before the Gulf States had seceded, the North was, according to a *New Yorker*, “fast being consolidated in opposition to the rumored attempts of the South to take possession of public property.”<sup>367</sup> The secession of South Carolina was offensive enough to the North; but when Palmetto State forces then seized federal property, it caused “new indignation,” reported an Iowa congressman.<sup>368</sup> In referring to this “sad blunder” by the disunionists, John Pendleton Kennedy of Maryland observed on February 10: “It is treason, and an indignity to the Sovereignty of the United States. That incident alone has changed the temper of the

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<sup>363</sup> John G. Nicolay, memorandum, 22 December 1860, Burlingame, ed., With Lincoln in the White House, 21.

<sup>364</sup> J[ames] H. v[an] A[llen] to Horace Greeley, St. Louis, 21 December 1860, Greeley Papers, New York Public Library.

<sup>365</sup> Horace White to Edward L. Pierce, n.p., n.d., quoted in Pierce to Charles Sumner, Boston, 3 January 1861, Sumner Papers, Harvard University.

<sup>366</sup> Silvana R. Siddali, “‘The Sport of Folly and the Prize of Treason’: Confederate Property Seizures and the Northern Home Front in the Secession Crisis,” Civil War History 47 (2001): 310-33 (quote from the Chicago Tribune of 15 May 1861 appears on p. 332); Silvana R. Siddali, From Property to Person: Slavery and the Confiscation Acts, 1861-1862 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2005), 17-54.

<sup>367</sup> Sidney Webster to Caleb Cushing, New York, 5 January 1861, Caleb Cushing Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>368</sup> Samuel R. Curtis to his wife, Washington, 30 December 1860, Samuel R. Curtis Papers, Beinecke Library, Yale University.

whole North. It has done very much the same thing here [in Maryland]. The hauling down of our glorious Stars and Stripes . . . has awakened a volume of ardor in favor of the Union which might otherwise have slept.”<sup>369</sup> In New York, Democratic politician John A. Dix observed the same phenomenon. If the secessionists had behaved peaceably, the North probably would have acquiesced, but, recalled Dix, “the forcible seizure of arsenals, mints, revenue-cutters, and other property of the common government, . . . aroused a feeling of exasperation which nothing but the arbitrament of arms could overcome.”<sup>370</sup>

Beset with worries about Moultrie and other forts, Lincoln turned his attention to Winfield Scott. In late October, the general had recommend to him that all unmanned or undermanned federal forts be garrisoned and expressed the hope that a moderate but firm policy would thwart the secessionists.<sup>371</sup> Lincoln thanked Scott and instructed E. B. Washburne to tell the general “to be as well prepared as he can to either hold, or retake, the forts, as the case may require, at, and after the inauguration.”<sup>372</sup> On December 21, Lincoln wrote Scott saying that “if the forts shall be given up before the inauguration, the General must retake them afterwards.”<sup>373</sup> Five days later, Major Robert Anderson caused a sensation when he abandoned Fort Moultrie, which he rightly feared the secessionists would overrun, and moved his troops to Fort Sumter in the middle of Charleston harbor,

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<sup>369</sup> John Pendleton Kennedy to Phillips C. Pendleton, Baltimore, 10 February 1861, copy, Kennedy Letterbooks, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Baltimore.

<sup>370</sup> Morgan Dix, ed., *Memoirs of John Adams Dix* (2 vols.; New York: Harper & Brothers, 1883) 1:345.

<sup>371</sup> Winfield Scott, “Views suggested by the imminent danger (Oct. 29, 1860) of a disruption of the Union by the secession of one or more Southern States,” Scott to Lincoln, Washington, 29 October 1860, Lincoln Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>372</sup> Lincoln to Scott, Springfield, 9 November 1860; Lincoln to E. B. Washburne, Springfield, 22 December 1860, Basler, ed. *Collected Works of Lincoln*, 4:137, 159.

<sup>373</sup> Lincoln to F. P. Blair, Sr., Springfield, 21 December 1860, Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Lincoln*, 4:157.

far less vulnerable to attack. Hard-liners in the North cheered this bold action. Assessing events in the Palmetto State, Lincoln allegedly said “that the laws must be enforced, that the general government can do nothing else till the people consent to release that State from her allegiance to the government.” He approved Anderson’s conduct “in the most emphatic terms” and indicated that if “Buchanan should dismiss Major Anderson he would be reinstated the moment Mr. Lincoln comes into power, and probably promoted; and if not dismissed [by Buchanan], he would be cordially sustained by the incoming administration.”<sup>374</sup>

By late January, Lincoln was devoting much time to his inaugural address and to the speeches he would deliver en route to Washington.<sup>375</sup> To concentrate on that task and avoid distracting visits, he squirreled himself away in a small, little-used room of the store owned by his brother-in-law, Clark M. Smith, who provided a table and chair, the only furniture available to Lincoln there.<sup>376</sup> He also took refuge in the hotel room of Thomas D. Jones, a Cincinnati sculptor who was executing a bust of the president-elect.<sup>377</sup>

Herndon recalled that in late January, Lincoln “informed me that he was ready to begin the preparation of his inaugural address. He had, aside from his law books and the few gilded volumes that ornamented the centre-table in his parlor at home, comparatively no library. He never seemed to care to own or collect books. On the other hand I had a

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<sup>374</sup> This is a paraphrase of a letter by a prominent Indiana politician who had recently visited Lincoln. Washington correspondence, 6 January, New York Herald, 7 January 1861.

<sup>375</sup> Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 29 January, New York Herald, 4 February 1861.

<sup>376</sup> John G. Nicolay, “Some Incidents in Lincoln’s Journey from Springfield to Washington,” Burlingame, ed., Oral History of Lincoln, 107; Jesse W. Weik, “Lincoln’s Last Visit to Indianapolis,” Indianapolis Star, 12 February 1911.

<sup>377</sup> Thomas D. Jones to William Linn McMillen, Springfield, 11 February 1861, Lincoln Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University.

very respectable collection, and was adding to it every day. To my library Lincoln very frequently had access. When, therefore, he began on his inaugural speech he told me what works he intended to consult. I looked for a long list, but when he went over it I was greatly surprised. He asked me to furnish him with Henry Clay's great speech delivered in 1850; Andrew Jackson's proclamation against Nullification; and a copy of the Constitution. He afterwards called for Webster's reply to Hayne, a speech which he read when he lived at New Salem, and which he always regarded as the grandest specimen of American oratory." Herndon also supplied a copy of George Washington's farewell address. With these few books and documents at his fingertips, Lincoln secluded himself at Smith's store and drafted his inaugural.<sup>378</sup>

An editorial in the Illinois State Journal, perhaps written by Lincoln, quoted President Jackson's January 16, 1833 message to Congress attacking the nullification doctrine: "The right of the people of a single state to absolve themselves at will, and without the consent of the other States, from their most solemn obligations, and hazard the liberties and happiness of the millions composing this union, cannot be acknowledged. Such authority is believed to be utterly repugnant both to the principles upon which the general government is constituted, and to the objects which it was expressly formed to attain. . . . While a forbearing spirit may, and I trust will, be exercised toward the errors of our brethren in a particular quarter, duty to the rest of the Union demands that open and organized resistance to the laws should not be executed with impunity."<sup>379</sup>

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<sup>378</sup> Herndon, "Facts Illustrative of Mr. Lincoln's Patriotism and Statesmanship," lecture given in Springfield, 24 January 1866, Abraham Lincoln Quarterly 3 (1944-45): 194. Cf. interview with Lincoln, Springfield correspondence, 14 November, New York Evening Post, 19 November 1860.

<sup>379</sup> Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 25 December 1860,

In late December, Lincoln was reportedly given to quoting Henry Clay's 1850 speech regarding South Carolina's threatened secession: "I should deplore as much as any man living or dead that armies should be raised against the authority of the Union, either by individuals or States. But after all that has occurred, if any one State, or a portion of the people of any State, choose to place themselves in military array against the government of the Union, I am for trying the strength of the government. I am for ascertaining whether we have a government or not – practical, efficient, capable or maintaining its authority and upholding the powers and interests which belong to a government. Now, sir, am I to be alarmed or dissuaded from any such course by intimations of spilling blood? If blood is to be spilled, by whose fault will it be? Upon this supposition I maintain it will be the fault of those who raise the standard of disunion and endeavor to prostrate the government. And, sir, when that is done, so long as it pleases God to give me a vote to express my sentiment, and an arm, weak and enfeebled as it may be by age, that voice and that arm will be on the side of my country, for the support of the general authority, and for the maintenance of the powers of this Union. . . . that suppose we should be disappointed and the standard should be raised of open resistance to the union, and constitution and the laws, what is to be done? There can be but one possible answer: the power, the authority and dignity of the government ought to be maintained, and resistance put down at every hazard. . . . the moment a daring hand is raised to resist, by force, the execution of the laws, the duty of enforcing them arise, and if the conflict which may ensue should lead to civil war, the resisting party, having begun it, will be responsible for all the consequences."<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>380</sup> Springfield correspondence by Villard, 23 December, New York Herald 27 December 1860.

At Lincoln’s request, William Bailhache of the Illinois State Journal secretly printed a few copies of the inaugural address and kept them under lock and key. Before leaving Springfield, Lincoln showed one copy to a stiff-back Republican, Carl Schurz, who approved its insistence that the revenues be collected, that federal facilities be retaken, and that the laws be enforced. In Springfield, Lincoln also showed his inaugural address to David Davis<sup>381</sup>

In preparation for his departure, Lincoln “with his characteristic dutifulness” rented out his house, sold his furniture, threw an elaborate farewell party, visited his stepmother, reminisced with old friends, and arranged his itinerary.<sup>382</sup> The day he left, after roping the trunks which had been packed by his servant Maria Vance, he affixed simple identification tags to them:

A. Lincoln

White House

Washington, D.C.<sup>383</sup>

In taking leave of Sarah Bush Lincoln, whom he saw at Farmington near Charleston on January 30, Lincoln “was very affectionate.”<sup>384</sup> She was living with Augustus H. Chapman, who asked Lincoln to visit her: “She is getting somewhat childish and is very uneasy about you fearing some of your political opponents will kill you. She

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<sup>381</sup> King, David Davis, 175.

<sup>382</sup> Springfield correspondence by T. W., 7 February, Missouri Democrat (St. Louis), 8 February 1861; Springfield correspondence by Henry Villard, 9 February, Cincinnati Commercial, 11 February 1861; Baringer, House Dividing, 252-64.

<sup>383</sup> Illinois State Register (Springfield), n.d., in Weik, Real Lincoln, ed. Burlingame, 307; reminiscences of Maria Vance, Illinois State Journal (Springfield), 13 July 1903. I am grateful to Wayne C. Temple for calling the latter item to my attention.

<sup>384</sup> Augustus Chapman to William Herndon, Charleston, Illinois, 8 October 1865, in Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis, eds., Herndon's Informants: Letters, Interviews, and Statements about Abraham Lincoln (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1998), 136.

is very anxious to see you once more.”<sup>385</sup> (On the train carrying him from Charleston back to Springfield, a fellow passenger was “much taken aback” by Lincoln’s “ill fitting clothes worn boots and stovepipe hat.”)

Lincoln was also affectionate with Herndon when he said good bye. “Billy,” he asked on the eve of his departure for Washington, “how long have we been together?”

“Over sixteen years.”

“We’ve never had a cross word during all thing time, have we?”

“No, indeed we have not.”

After reminiscing about various cases, Lincoln pointed to the firm’s sign-board outside the office and said: “Let it hang there undisturbed. Give our clients to understand that the election of a President makes no change in the firm of Lincoln and Herndon. If I live I’m coming back some time, and then we’ll go right on practicing law as if nothing had ever happened.”<sup>386</sup> (Herndon told Caroline Dall a different version of this farewell: “I will have no other partner while you live Bill, if you keep straight.”)<sup>387</sup>

As a parting gift, Lincoln offered Herndon his books. Overhearing him, Mary Lincoln sharply asked: “Abraham, are you going to give away everything we have got?” He replied: “Mary, if you will attend to your business, I will attend to mine.”<sup>388</sup>

When Republican legislatures and governors throughout the North urged him to speak in their cities as he made his way to the nation’s capital, Lincoln remarked that if

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<sup>385</sup> A. H. Chapman to Lincoln, Charleston, Illinois, 3 January 1861, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>386</sup> William H. Herndon and Jesse W. Weik, *Herndon’s Lincoln*, ed. Douglas L. Wilson and Rodney O. Davis (1889; Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 289-90.

<sup>387</sup> 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.

<sup>388</sup> E. J. Searle observed this episode, which his son, Judge Charles J. Searle, recounted to Joseph B. Oakleaf. Oakleaf memorandum, 14 February 1925, Oakleaf Papers, Indiana University.

he were accept them all, “he would not get to Washington until the Inauguration was over.”<sup>389</sup> He did agree, however, to make addresses in Indiana, Ohio, New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

Eager to take the reins of government, Lincoln was dismayed as he watched Buchanan fail to resist the takeover of federal facilities in seceding states, or to try regaining them once they were seized, or to dispatch the navy to collect revenues at Southern ports, or to call for volunteers to uphold the Union.<sup>390</sup> The president-elect lamented to his old friend Joseph Gillespie on New Year’s Day 1861: “every hour adds to the difficulties I am called upon to meet, and the present Administration does nothing to check the tendency toward dissolution. I, who have been called to meet this awful responsibility, am compelled to remain here, doing nothing to avert it or, lessen its force when it comes to me.” Speaking with more bitterness than Gillespie ever heard him express, he added: “It is not of myself that I complain. But every day adds to the difficulty of the situation and makes the outlook for the country more gloomy. Secession is being fostered, rather than repressed, and if the doctrine meets with general acceptance in the border States it will be a great blow to the Government.” His plight reminded Lincoln of a law case that he and Gillespie had once tried: “I suppose you will never forget that trial down in Montgomery County where the lawyer associated with you gave away the whole case in his opening speech. I saw you signaling to him, but you couldn’t

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<sup>389</sup> Nathan Allen, diary, entry for 1 February 1861, Missouri Historical Society.

<sup>390</sup> Stamp, And the War Came, 46-109.



stop him. Now that's just the way with me and Buchanan. He is giving away the case and I have nothing to say and can't stop him."<sup>391</sup>

A few days thereafter, a friend reported that Lincoln "has a world of responsibility & seems to feel it & to be oppressed by it. He looks care worn & more haggard & stooped than I ever saw him."<sup>392</sup> Gustave Koerner, who also noted that Lincoln "looks care worn," thought that "no man was ever in this country placed in a more perplexing and trying situation, than he is."<sup>393</sup>

Lincoln grew exasperated with congressional Republicans as well as with Buchanan. On February 4, the senate passed a bill organizing the Colorado Territory with no provision excluding slavery. A short while later, similar legislation for Nevada and Dakota was adopted. "It seems to me," Lincoln told Gillespie, "that Douglas got the best of it at the election last fall. I am left to face an empty treasury and a great rebellion, while my own party endorses his popular sovereignty idea and applies it in legislation." As he was about to leave for Washington, he said to his old friend: "I only wish I could have got there to lock the door before the horse was stolen."<sup>394</sup>

On February 11, he boarded a train that would take him to the nation's capital, where he would try to keep other horses – the eight Slave States in the border region and the Upper South which had not yet seceded – from being stolen.

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<sup>391</sup> "Lincoln's Time of Agony," reminiscences of Joseph Gillespie, Springfield correspondence, 2 February, New York Tribune, 5 February 1888.

<sup>392</sup> W. H. L. Wallace to his wife Ann, Springfield, 11 January 1861, Wallace-Dickey Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield.

<sup>393</sup> Gustave Koerner to Lyman Trumbull, Belleville, 21 January 1861, Lyman Trumbull Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>394</sup> "Lincoln's Time of Agony," reminiscences of Joseph Gillespie, Springfield correspondence, 2 February, New York Tribune, 5 February 1888.