

LINCOLN LORE

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SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES

CHARLESTON, SEPTEMBER 18, 1858

In many respects the Charleston debate on Saturday, September 18, was the most picturesque of all the contests. There was an unusually large number of banners displayed and they played no small part in influencing the remarks of the speakers themselves. The largest one, 80 feet long, reached across the street from the Capitol Hotel to the Court House. It featured Abraham Lincoln driving an ox team through the town, thirty years before, when the Lincoln family migrated to Illinois. The home of Lincoln's father for many years was not far from Charleston, and his step-mother still resided there at the time of the debate. The event was made a homecoming for Lincoln.

Both candidates found it necessary to come to Charleston by the way of Mattoon which allowed their supporters to organize two large parades to escort the speakers. Upon reaching Charleston, Lincoln was entertained at the Capitol House, while Douglas was received at the Union House. The debate was held at the fair grounds, and the attendance was estimated all the way from ten to fifteen thousand. It was here that one of the members of the press in reporting the event used the expression, "The prairies are on fire."

Possibly the most drastic incident in the debate was the leading forth of Hon. O. B. Ficklin by Lincoln, who made this staunch supporter of Douglas testify as to what he knew about Lincoln's votes on the Mexican War situation.

Speech of Lincoln

Introduction

Not in favor of bringing about the social and political equality of the white and black races (Paragraphs 1, 2).

Because the white man is to have the superior position, the negro should not be denied everything (3).

Will stand by the law of Illinois which forbids the marrying of white people and negroes (4).

Argument

A. The Kansas Constitution.

(a) *Trumbull's Mantle Falls on Lincoln.*

Trumbull charged Douglas favored constitution for Kansas which prevented giving people a voice in the proceedings (5).

Having endorsed Trumbull's character, Douglas proposes to hold me responsible for the alleged Trumbull slanders, which responsibility I accept (6).

Senator Bigler reported conference of senators on Enabling Act for people of Kansas; Douglas's part in it (7-8).

(b) *Douglas's Reaction to Trumbull Reviewed.*

Holds Douglas had a reason for striking out clause in Constitution (9-10).

Words Trumbull alleged were in Toombs Bill were in fact originally there (11-14).

What Trumbull did about bill can not relieve Douglas from responsibility (15).

The fact that Trumbull did not offer amendment does not relieve Judge Douglas (16).

Douglas rather than Trumbull shifted ground on question (17-20).

(c) *The Alleged Trumbull Forgeries.*

Douglas claims Trumbull forged his evidence from beginning to end (21).

Copies of the Toombs Bill as it went to Douglas and the bill as it was amended by Douglas were not forgeries (21).

The Bigler amendment not a forgery (22-27).

The three instances where Trumbull quotes Douglas are not forgeries (28-35).

There can be no forgery where every piece of evidence is genuine (36-39).

(d) *The Submission Clause.*

Bill that went to Douglas's hands had provision in it for submitting Constitution to people and he took it out. If words Douglas struck out were harmless, as he alleges, why did he deem it necessary to strike out those particular harmless words (41)?

How could he infer that a submission was implied after its express provision had been stricken out (41)?

If Douglas admits he took out of the bill the clause in question, I ask him why he did it (41)?

Speech of Douglas

A. *Racial Equality.*

Glad he has succeeded in getting an answer from Lincoln on question of negro citizenship and eligibility to office (Paragraph 1).

B. *The Kansas Constitution.*

Both Trumbull and Lincoln criticized for not bringing the plot in the Kansas question before the people at the time of the 1856 election (2).

Amazed that Lincoln should endorse the charge of Trumbull (3).

The original charge by Trumbull read showing its relation to Popular Sovereignty and indirectly accusing Douglas of participating in a scheme to defraud the people (4-8).

Only question at issue in Toombs Bill was the population clause (9).

Lincoln brought up the Trumbull argument to conceal question which divided parties (10-11).

Douglas reviews his activities as chairman of the Committee on Territories (12-16).

Examination of the records proves that Trumbull's charge—that the Toombs Bill contained clause requiring Constitution to be

submitted to the people—is false (17-25).

Claims Trumbull did falsify the records of the country (26).

C. *The Pro-Slavery Conspiracy.*

Lincoln's charge against him in connection with conspiracy branded as falsehood (27).

Details about Dred Scott case given (28).

President Buchanan defended from any part in such a conspiracy (29).

Inspection of own public service invited and attention drawn to Lincoln's Mexican War record (30-31).

D. *The New Abolition Party.*

Principles of Old Line Whigs and Democrats much the same (32).

Clay, Webster, and Cass supported compromise measures (33-37).

Lincoln and Trumbull formed scheme by which two great parties would be abolitionized (38-39).

Campaign activities of Lincoln and Trumbull in favor of abolitionism (40-49).

Black Republicans change their name in different sections (50-51).

E. *Racial Equality.*

Lincoln's opposition to Dred Scott Decision implies he favors negro citizenship (52).

Lincoln's claim that the Declaration of Independence asserts racial equality of negro and white, advocates giving citizenship to negro (53).

F. *The "House Divided" Speech.*

Government has existed and prospered throughout its history divided on the slavery question and can continue to prosper (54).

Mr. Lincoln's Rejoinder

Not in favor of negro citizenship, but different states have power to make negroes citizens under the Constitution. The Dred Scott Decision decides they have not that power (Paragraphs 1, 2).

Judge Douglas challenged to point out any differences in Lincoln's speeches north and south (3).

The nation has been divided on the slavery question for more than forty years; and it will not be settled until put on the basis where our fathers placed it (4-7).

Have twice told Judge Douglas there is not one word of truth in the alleged Trumbull-Lincoln conspiracy (8).

Reply to Mexican War charge; Ficklin brought forward as witness (9-12).

The Trumbull evidence reviewed and assertion made that Douglas has not been successful in proving false a single charge preferred by Trumbull (13-15).

A right to infer that Judge Douglas anticipated that Kansas would come into the Union with a constitution which had not been submitted to the people (16-17).