

LINCOLN LORE

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SEVENTY-FIFTH ANNIVERSARY OF THE LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATES

ALTON, OCTOBER 15, 1858

The last of the series of debates at Alton hardly can be considered a climax in any form except in its chronological order. The crowd was much smaller than at any other place except Jonesboro. The arguments of both candidates did not reach the high points of interest attained in some of the other discussion and much of what was said could not be heard because of poor speaking conditions. Judge Douglas made his headquarters at the Alton House while Lincoln stopped at the Franklin House.

The stand for the speakers was constructed by the side of the new city hall which made the public square available as a place for the people to congregate.

Speech of Douglas

Introduction

Confined myself in my speeches before Ottawa debate to controverting these three propositions of Lincoln (Paragraphs 1-5).

1. That the union could not exist as our fathers made it, divided into Free and Slave States.

2. That there should be a crusade against the Supreme Court of the United States because of the Dred Scott Decision.

3. That the Declaration of Independence included and meant the Negroes as well as the white men when it declared all men to be created equal.

Argument

A. House Divided Question.

Our Government can endure forever divided into Free and Slave states as our fathers made it (6).

The Union was established on the right of each state to do as it pleased on the slavery question (7).

If Lincoln's abolition doctrine had prevailed when the Government was made, it would have established slavery in all the states (8, 9).

B. The Extension of Slavery.

Would Lincoln vote for any more slave states even if people wanted them (10-12)?

He will not answer questions put to him about admitting any of the territories now in existence (13-15).

C. Review of Douglas's Public Record.

Fought the Lecompton Constitution to its death (16, 17).

Refused to support the English Bill (18-21).

A Democratic administration has made war on me (Douglas) because I would not surrender my convictions of duty (22, 23).

No time in history when all Democrats should stand together as they should today (24, 25).

The Washington Union, claiming to be the organ of the Democratic

administration, tried to read me out of party (26, 27).

Supported the guarantee of the Kansas Nebraska Bill (28-30).

D. Racial Equality.

The signers of the Declaration of Independence had no reference to Negroes, Indians, Fiji-Islanders, nor any other barbarous race when they declared all men to be created equal (31).

Inferior races should be extended all rights and privileges consistent with public safety (32).

Should not allow sectional party to convert North and South into enemies (33).

Speech of Lincoln

A. The Democratic Schism.

Douglas has vastly improved in his attack upon the Democratic administration (Paragraphs 1-2).

B. Dred Scott Decision.

Never have complained especially of Dred Scott Decision because it held Negro could not be a citizen (3).

Mentioned Negro citizenship only in connection with the introduction of Nebraska Bill (4, 5).

C. Racial Equality.

Douglas has garbled extracts from my speeches to make it appear as if I were in favor of perfect social equality between Negroes and Whites (6-9).

The first man to state "all men" in the Declaration of Independence did not include Negro was Taney, the next one Douglas (10-15).

The theory that the Negro is not included in Declaration of Independence should be combatted as it has a tendency to dehumanize the Negro (16-22).

Mr. Clay stated that in laying the foundations of societies in our territories where it does not exist he would be opposed to the introduction of slavery (23-25).

D. The House Divided Question.

The Nebraska Bill was brought forward for the avowed purpose of putting an end to the slavery agitation (26-31).

When slavery is mentioned in Constitution covert language is used (32-37).

Fathers did not make Government half slave and half free; they found the institution among us and left it as they found it. Why could not Judge Douglas have left it alone (38-39)?

Unrest not due to quarrel over natural domestic institutions but over the spread of the institution of slavery (40-43).

Slavery the question which has caused the unrest in politics, in religion, in literature, in morals, in all the manifold relations of life (44, 45).

We insist that new territories shall be kept free from slavery while in the territorial condition (46-48).

E. The Moral Issue in Slavery.

The Republican party insists that slavery should be treated as a wrong and provisions should be made that it shall grow no larger (49-52).

The Democratic sentiment treats slavery as not being a wrong (53).

The two principles which will ever be opposed are the common right of humanity on one hand and the "divine right of kings" on the other (54-56).

Judge Douglas has been the most prominent instrument in putting slavery on the cotton-gin basis where he openly confesses he has no desire that there will be an end of it (57).

F. The Constitutional Right to Hold a Slave.

Before the Dred Scott Decision, Douglas claimed the constitutional right to hold a slave was a question for the Supreme Court; after the discussion he claimed it was a question for the people to settle (58).

No man can deny his obligation to give the necessary legislation to support slavery in a territory who believes it is a constitutional right to have it there (59-61).

Nullifying the alleged constitutional right of a citizen to hold slaves in a territory by unfriendly legislation is on a par with nullifying the Fugitive Slave Law (62).

The Douglas Rejoinder

Lincoln's hopes for success depend on war in Democratic ranks (Paragraphs 1-3).

Lincoln's Mexican War record reviewed and claim made that Lincoln took sides with the enemy against his own country (4-5).

Lincoln was disloyal to Henry Clay and helped defeat him (6, 7).

Other factors, nullification and tariff, have disturbed the Union as well as slavery (8).

Let us recognize the right of each state to keep slavery as long as its people determine or to abolish it when they please (9, 10).

How does Mr. Lincoln expect to put slavery in course of ultimate extinction without interfering with it in states where it exists (11)?

Lincoln proposes to govern territories without giving them representation (12).

If the people want slavery let them have it, if they do not want it allow them to refuse to encourage it (13).

Stand by the Constitution as our fathers made it, obey the laws as they are passed, and sustain the decisions of the Supreme Court and constitutional authority (14).