

LINCOLN LORE

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POLITICAL BROADSIDES

The radio, possibly more than any other medium of information, has almost entirely eliminated the use of handbills which formerly cluttered up front yards and which afforded pin-money to small boys for delivering them. The political broadside is one of the members of the handbill family which has faded out with the coming of political broadcasts.

There is probably no class of Lincoln literature, of real worth, which has been more neglected than the political broadside. It is largely due to the fact that there is no adequate check list to establish a background for study in this interesting field. The political broadside, very often distributed with no means of identifying the author, by its anonymous character came to have an ignominious name, and it became a common weapon for the attack of individual candidates and political parties.

One of the most interesting political broadsides in the files of the Lincoln National Life Foundation is an attempt on the part of the Republicans in the Campaign of 1860 to utilize a Bell speech in favor of Lincoln. Excerpts from a speech in favor of Bell and Everett delivered in Boston by Richard Thompson, were so selected and published that the speech was virtually changed into a Lincoln campaign document. The broadside was sent to Mr. Thompson, of Terre Haute, Indiana, by George P. Green, of Boston, on September 7, 1860. Green calls attention to the broadside in these words: "By the enclosed document you will see to what base use the John Brown Republicans of this state are making of the garbled extracts from your late speech."

CAMPAIGN DOCUMENT

"The attention of the honest supporters of John Bell for President, and Edward Everett for Vice-President, is invited to the following extracts from a speech recently delivered by the Hon. Richard W. Thompson, of Indiana, one of the founders of the Constitutional Union Party, and one of the ablest public men in the West. Friends of the Constitution, the Union, and the Enforcement of the Laws, read and ponder!"

The above paragraph appears below the masthead and is then followed by several excerpts from Thompson's speech. A few of the more interesting statements are selected:

"When we made our nomination of Mr. Bell at Baltimore, there was an implied agreement resting upon all of us, that we would support the ticket straight through, 'live or die, sink or swim, survive or perish.' We were to stand by that nomination, because we considered the Democrats and Republicans both wrong. . . .

"Instead of fighting Douglas, Breckinridge, and Lincoln, some gentlemen have seen fit to make a little private agreement with the Douglas men that they will tie fast together to see if the two cannot, by uniting, effect something in the Presidential election. . . .

"I am a Union man, and I believe you are Union men, too. (Applause.) I would greatly prefer to see Mr. Bell elected, but he never shall be elected with my consent, nor shall any other man, by a bargain with Mr. Douglas and his friends; or with Mr. Breckinridge and his friends. (Applause.) I will make no bargains with them.

"Candor compels me to say that I do not believe there

is much prospect of Mr. Bell's being elected by the Electoral Colleges—that is, I do not think there are men enough in the country who look at this thing just as I do, to vote for him and elect him by the Colleges. I regret it, but cannot help it. I am not responsible for the consequences. I am like the doctor who gives medicine, but cannot insure the eradication of the disease. I do not believe any body can be elected by the Colleges unless it be Mr. Lincoln. (Applause.) I am dealing in matters of fact. I do not believe Mr. Breckinridge can be elected by the people. As for Mr. Douglas, I am candid and honest when I tell you (I mean no disrespect to him at all, for I hold him in high personal regard,) I think he will lack just one State of getting as many as Mr. Fillmore got in 1856. (Laughter.) If he gets an electoral vote at all, I do not know where it will come from. I will not say it with any degree of certainty, but it is possible that Mr. Lincoln will be elected by the people. (Applause.) I think his chances are increasing daily.

"Still, in view of the character of Mr. Bell, and his eminent services to the country, and the general appreciation of him by all parties, I would even agree to an election by Congress, if it were possible, rather than see any sectional candidate elected. But how is it possible, as the House now stands? There are fifteen Republican States, all of which will vote for Lincoln, thirteen that will vote for Breckinridge, one for Bell, and one for Douglas. Now, I suppose the contest to be in the House, and if Bell and Douglas unite, they will have just two States. (Laughter.) If the Breckinridge States and those for Bell and Douglas, could all unite, including the three States that are tied, this would elect. But could they unite? There is no probability of it, unless Bell should outrun Breckenridge in the South, when it might be done to defeat Lincoln. But if Breckinridge should beat Bell in the South, although Bell might go to the House, no such arrangement could possibly be made, for the plain reason that in such an event the Breckinridge men would defeat the election, in order that the Senate might elect Gen. Lane, which it would immediately do, if it had the power. Rather than see this result brought about, I tell you, frankly, I would prefer the election of Mr. Lincoln. (Applause.)

"I repeat, that I have no fear that Mr. Lincoln's election will tend to bring about a dissolution of the Union. Indeed, I have no fears of such a result occurring upon either Douglas's or Breckinridge's election. As for Mr. Bell, I do not believe any body can have any fears for the Union growing out of his election, for all concede that he and his friends will stand by the Union to the last. All this stuff about dissolving the Union, when any man is elected, is all humbug. (Applause.) If Mr. Lincoln is elected to the presidency, he will be entitled to the respect of every man in the United States.

"Mr. Lincoln's strength consists in his conservatism. His own principles are conservative. I know him well. I served in Congress with him. The slavery question was then up. I was upon very intimate terms with him, and I know just how he felt about this question of slavery. I must say that I feel sometimes a good deal indignant when I hear his votes complained of, votes which he gave along with me and others in support of Whig principles. (Applause.)"