

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 829

Fort Wayne, Indiana

February 25, 1945

THE PEACE RESOLUTIONS IN ILLINOIS

The states of Ohio, Indiana and Illinois might be personified as the three "Mid-West Sisters." The loyalties of two of them to their Uncle Sam during the Civil War were often challenged. Vallandigham and his Copperheads in Ohio and Voorhees and his Knights of the Golden Circle, in Indiana, became notorious in their fifth column activities to undermine the Lincoln administration.

Little has been said, however, about O'Brien and his "Fire-in-the-Rear" patriots of Illinois. Possibly the casual reader has felt that inasmuch as Lincoln was an Illinois man his administration received unanimous support from that state. But this third sister, Illinois, was not always commendable for her loyalty during the rebellion.

Similar to the movements in both Ohio and Indiana, the Illinois fifth column activities were largely political in origin and effort. The Vallandigham of Illinois was W. W. O'Brien, of Peoria. It is the same O'Brien who is quoted by the *Chicago Times* as having said at the 1864 Democratic Convention in Chicago, that the candidate nominated would on the following inauguration day in March "apply his boot to 'old Abe's posterior' and kick him out of the presidential chair."

O'Brien conceived and guided successfully through the House a vicious bill known as "The Illinois Peace Resolutions of 1863." It carried in this branch of the legislature by a vote of 52 to 28. The humiliation was much more accentuated by the fact that the vote was taken on Lincoln's birthday. The bill struck a snag in the State Senate, however, where a tie vote was registered. Lieut.-Governor Hoffman, then casting the vote against the "Fire-in-the-Rear" patriots, and Governor Yates adjourned the session. There is not room in a single issue of *Lincoln Lore* to present these peace resolutions in full, but the most important resolutions are supplied as Illinois' contributions to the fifth column activities of 1863.

"Resolved, by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring herein), That the army was organized, confiding in the declaration of the President in his inaugural address—to-wit: that he had no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it existed, and that he believed he had no lawful right to do so, and that he had no inclination to do so; and upon the declaration of the Federal Congress—to-wit: that this war is not waged in any spirit of oppression or subjugation, or any purpose of overthrowing any of the institutions of any of the States: and that inasmuch as the whole policy of the Administration since the organization of the army has been at war with the declarations aforesaid, culminating in the emancipation proclamation, leaving the fact patent that the War has been diverted from its first avowed object to that of subjugation and the abolition of slavery, a fraud, both legal and moral, has been perpetrated upon the brave sons of Illinois, who have so nobly gone forth to battle for the Constitution and the laws; and, while we protest against the continuance of this gross fraud upon our citizen soldiers, we thank them for that heroic conduct on the battlefield that sheds imperishable glory on the State of Illinois.

"Resolved, That we believe the further prosecution of the present War cannot result in the restoration of the Union and the preservation of the Constitution as our fathers made it unless the President's emancipation proclamation be withdrawn.

"Resolved, That while we condemn and denounce the flagrant and monstrous usurpations of the Administra-

tion and encroachments of Abolitionism, we equally condemn and denounce the ruinous heresy of Secession as unwarranted by the Constitution and destructive alike of the security and perpetuity of our Government and the peace and liberty of the people; and fearing, as we do, that it is the intention of the present Congress and Administration at no distant day to acknowledge the independence of the Southern Confederacy and thereby sever the Union, we hereby solemnly declare that we are unalterably opposed to any such severance of the Union, and that we never can consent that the great Northwest shall be separated from the Southern States comprising the Mississippi Valley. That river shall never water the soil of two nations, but, from its source to its confluence with the gulf, shall belong to one great and united people.

"Resolved, That peace, fraternal relations, and political fellowship should be restored among the States; that the best interests of all and the welfare of man required that this should be done in the most speedy and most effective manner; that it is to the people we must look for a restoration of the Union and the blessings of peace, and to these ends we shall direct our earnest and honest efforts; and hence we are in favor of the assembling of a National convention of all the States to so adjust our National difficulties that the States may hereafter live in harmony, each being secured in the rights guaranteed respectively to all by our fathers; and which convention, we recommend, shall convene at Louisville, Ky., or such other place as shall be determined upon by Congress or the several States at the earliest practicable period.

"Resolved, further, therefore, That, to retain the object of the foregoing resolutions, we hereby memorialize the Congress of the United States, the Administration at Washington, and the Executives and Legislatures of the several States to take such immediate action as shall secure an armistice in which the rights and safety of the Government shall be fully protected for such length of time as may be necessary to enable the people to meet in convention aforesaid; and we therefore earnestly recommend to our fellow-citizens everywhere to observe and keep all their lawful and constitutional obligations, to abstain from all violence and to meet together and reason each with the other upon the best mode to attain the great blessing of peace, unity, and liberty; and be it further

"Resolved, That, to secure the cooperation of the States and the General Government, Stephen T. Logan, Samuel S. Marshall, H. K. S. O'Melveny, William C. Goudy, Anthony Thornton, and John D. Caton are hereby appointed Commissioners to confer immediately with Congress and the President of the United States, and with the Legislatures and Executives of the several States, and urge the necessity of prompt action to secure said armistice, and the election of delegates to an early assembling of said convention, and to arrange and agree with the General Government and the several States upon the time and place of holding said convention, and that they report their action in the premises to the General Assembly of this State.

"Resolved, That the Speaker of the House of Representatives be requested to transmit a copy of the foregoing preamble and resolutions to the President of the United States, to each of our Senators and Representatives in Congress, and to each of the Governors and Speakers of the House of Representatives of the several States."