

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 1142

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

February 26, 1951

YOUNG MEN'S REPUBLICAN UNION

The organization more responsible than any other group for bringing Abraham Lincoln to the attention of the people was the Young Men's Republican Union of New York City. Their sponsorship of Lincoln's speech at Cooper Institute on February 27, 1860 brought him before the people of the East in a most favorable light and actually put him on the track for the Presidency. Preliminary to this eventful episode he had merely been Vice Presidential timber. The major place this organization played in Lincoln's political success deserves some recognition as far as its history is concerned. We are fortunate in having preserved in the Lincoln Papers in the Library of Congress a history of the association, prepared by its founders, from the time of its organization up to September 26, 1864, when the group was ready to throw its support to the Union nominees in the 1864 campaign. Excerpts from this brief history of the organization forwarded to President Lincoln follow:

"To the President

"Early in the month of July 1856 the 'Fremont and Dayton Central Union' was organized by the men who are at this moment most active in the 'Young Men's Republican Union.' It at once entered with the utmost activity into the work of the first Republican Campaign. Public meetings were held each week during the whole of that contest for Freedom, in the rooms of the Union at Stuyvesant Institute and also several most successful mass meetings were held in the Broadway Tabernacle, the most commodious hall in the city of New York . . .

"Forty active canvassers, delegates from the 'Union' spent the month of October in Pennsylvania. On election day more than 300 men from our organizations were employed in distributing tickets, guarding ticket booths, etc. . . .

"The expenses of the campaign of 1856 were about \$8,000 and were chiefly the contributions of the officers and members of the Union, all of whom were young men without ambition for political place or pecuniary reward. Seven million campaign documents were circulated, almost entirely our publications, and prepared for the exigency by our own men.

"From November 1856 to the commencement of the campaign of 1860 the 'Union' maintained its organization, having changed the name to that of the 'Republican Union.' . . . Our association was the first in the country to enter upon the campaign which resulted in your election. Our work began in January 1860 when a course of public meetings were inaugurated in which the names of Lincoln, Clay, Blair, Sherman, and Sumner were prominent. We were represented by delegates in the Chicago Convention and, upon the banner of the 'Republican Union' there were placed the names of Lincoln and Hamlin, within ten minutes after the nominations were announced. The first ratification in New York City was called by the Union, and held in our rooms. During that campaign we issued as before a weekly tract and in all circulated nearly 4,000,000 pages of documents, many of which were our own publications. Among these last were 864,000 pages of Lincoln's Cooper Institute speech,

with notes, the most elaborate and popular campaign document ever issued and 400,000 pages of an illustrated life of Lincoln in German which was mostly circulated in Pennsylvania.

"The first campaign of 'Wide Awakes' in New York State was organized by our 'Union', and the first parade in New York City, of that most successful of campaign accessories, was that of our companies . . . The expenses of this last campaign were met in the same manner as the first by our own members and the amount expended was about \$6,000.

"Said the *New York Tribune* of our work in 1860, 'Of all the clubs of the city none has done more gallant service than the body of young men.' In other words like them, the press of the country joined in 1860. John Wentworth's paper devoted a leading editorial to our report and eulogized it as showing a surprising amount of most useful work at a small cost.

"Since the election of 1860 our association has done its part towards the maintenance and diffusion of true principles. Soon after the Rebellion began Mr. Sumner delivered before our union his discourse on *The Rebellion, Its Origin and Mainsprings*. This oration was promptly printed and largely circulated, while a fine edition was forwarded to England for gratuitous distribution there. Subsequently we reprinted Mr. Sumner's speech on the *Barbarism of Slavery* of which, in a new and sightly dress, many thousands were circulated. Following this was the delivery by Mr. Sumner and the publication by us (for circulation here and abroad) of Mr. Sumner's speech on *Our Foreign Relations* and more recently we have printed the same senator's speech on the *Rights of Sovereignty and Rights of War*. Of this document also several thousand have been given away . . .

"The young men of our association have organized and sent to the field two regiments of soldiers commanded respectively by Col. Charles C. Nott, and the lamented Col. Perry of Brooklyn. Those same young men in another connection, organized and established in its present form that noble Charity, the United States Christian Commission.

"The work of a new campaign is now upon us. It will be sharp as it must be short. We feel that all true men should have a hand and voice in it in favor of the nominations made at Baltimore. We believe, honestly, that we have in our 'Union' done more to create a just sentiment on the questions involved in the contest than any organization of the kind in the land . . .

"Respectfully Submitted
by your Friends and Servants
Chas. T. Rogers, President
D. A. Hawkins, V. President
Frank W. Ballard, Cor. Secy.
Cephas Brainerd, Chm. Bd. of Control
Mark Hoyt

"New York Sept. 26, 1864."

On the back of this correspondence is the brief endorsement in Mr. Lincoln's hand "Young Men."

See Lincoln Lore numbers: 307, 509, 515, 589.