

The
**LINCOLN-
DOUGLAS
DEBATES**



*The first
complete,
unexpurgated
text*

*Edited and with an
introduction by*

Harold Holzer

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DEBATES

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T H E
LINCOLN-DOUGLAS
D E B A T E S



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**For my daughters,
Remy and Meg . . . great debaters**

Public sentiment is everything—
he who moulds public sentiment
is greater than he who makes statutes.

—ABRAHAM LINCOLN
*at the first debate
with Stephen A. Douglas,
Ottawa, Illinois,
August 21, 1858*

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Preface to the Fordham University Press Edition

TEN YEARS AGO, the initial appearance of this book unexpectedly set off a small firestorm in the Lincoln scholarly community. Of course, it was nothing like the mammoth explosion of interest that greeted the original Lincoln-Douglas debates. Back in 1858, the debates not only riveted the eyewitnesses who packed town squares and fairgrounds to hear them in Illinois, but also captured the attention of readers around the country who devoured every word in newspaper reprints.

Those very newspaper reprints had provided the inspiration for the 1993 book—as much for what they did *not* contain as what they *did*. In the age of Abraham Lincoln and Stephen A. Douglas, Republicans read Republican-affiliated newspapers, which featured debate transcripts recorded by Republican-hired stenographers—who spent far more time polishing Lincoln’s words than Douglas’s. Democrats, similarly, read pro-Democratic journals that offered well-prepared versions of the Democratic candidate’s

speeches, and but the roughest versions of his opponent's. The purpose of my book was to rescue the long-ignored, and likely unimproved "reverse" transcriptions of the debates—those which each party hireling had made of the opposition speaker—and therefore try to come as close as possible to the unedited and immediate truth of the most famous debates in American history.

The debates had been republished many times since 1858. But following Lincoln's lead in preparing for their initial appearance in book form in 1860, they had always featured Republican-sanctioned transcripts of Lincoln's remarks, and Democratic versions of Douglas's. Never before had anyone bothered to consult, much less publish, the "opposition" transcripts: the Republican-commissioned stenographic records of Democrat Douglas's speeches and rebuttals, and in turn, the Democratic Party-commissioned transcriptions of what Republican Lincoln said. Instead, for more than a century, readers had come to rely on—and unquestionably accept—the suspiciously well-parsed "official" transcriptions, undoubtedly edited further by the party press before their final publication, in an era in which newspapers were unashamedly allied with, and biased toward, one political party or another.¹

So much so, in fact, that *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* warned, two years before the Lincoln-Douglas debates got underway, that partisanship among the major publications sometimes exceeded that of their own readers. "The bitterness of partizanship," *Leslie's* declared in 1856, "and the indulgences of sectional feelings are more rife, in newspapers . . . than in the feelings of the voters." Considering that such an atmosphere prevailed in 1858, I always wondered why historians had trusted the sanitized, party-made debate records for so long.²

Historian Douglas L. Wilson in one sense agreed, commenting about my original 1993 book: "In making these opposition texts available, Holzer . . . performed a rare feat in Lincoln studies: bringing to light for the first time documents of great interest and importance that shed real light on the Lincoln-Douglas debates." But Wilson was troubled by what he called my "glaringly circular

¹ Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000), 163. The authors note that "urgent partisan rhetoric" was "a staple of the political press.

² *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, July 12, 1856.

argument” for their truthfulness, contending that the result put modern readers “in the awkward position of trusting extremely partisan newspapers without strong and compelling reasons for doing so.”³

But this was precisely the point for publishing the reverse transcripts—and remains the argument for reissuing this book a decade later: We had too long trusted the accepted texts and transcriptions. This book never intended to provide an unquestionable replacement text of the Lincoln-Douglas debates but, rather, an important alternative record that should be available to the public and judged for its veracity, as are the stenographic reports taken down by supporters of each debater.

Professor Wilson, who published a long “review essay” about the book in an important Lincoln journal, and later republished it in a book,⁴ did acknowledge, too, that the long-accepted texts should come under closer scrutiny. As he noted, the general editor of the fifty-year-old, terribly outdated *Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, had been under too much “pressure” to question, or vary from, the official record that Lincoln himself preserved in his personal scrapbook of debate transcripts, then supplied for republication as a book. Stephen A. Douglas himself, it might be noted—a reliable judge of the result, if there ever was one—was outraged by the production, charging that Lincoln’s supporters had improved their patron’s debate speeches, while ignoring, maybe even injuring, his own.⁵

This debate about the debates may understandably seem a bit arcane for many general readers—a contretemps by, of, and for Lincoln scholars. But it is well worth having, if only because it reminds readers and writers alike of the political culture that inspired such widespread and passionate participation by white men, even as it prohibited involvement by African Americans and women.

I wish I could convince myself—and the new readers I hope will consult this book—that it was able, in its first incarnation, to

³ Douglas L. Wilson, *Lincoln Before Washington: New Perspectives on the Illinois Years* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 152–153.

⁴ Douglas L. Wilson “The Lincoln Douglas Debates: An Unfinished Text,” *Journal of the Abraham Lincoln Association*, 15 (Winter 1994): 70–84.

⁵ Wilson, *Lincoln Before Washington*, 159.

widely convey new truths about those historic contests. But, as became all too apparent not too long before the original edition appeared, the debates remain the most egregiously misunderstood political encounters in American history.

In the fall of 1992, the candidates for Vice President of the United States—Republican Dan Quayle, Democrat Al Gore, and Ross Perot’s running mate, Admiral James Stockdale—met for a debate of their own, broadcast on national television. The sound bite of the evening belonged to the Admiral, for declaring, at one point: “Why am I here?” But he earned additional attention for reporting that he had just read the Lincoln-Douglas debates (the edited and polished transcripts, of course), and was struck by their high tone and broad focus. Like his modern rivals, he charged, Douglas seemed to know “all of the little stinky numbers, but “Abraham Lincoln had character,” and he, Stockdale, would endeavor to demonstrate the same.

The audience cheered lustily, as once and future vice president were both left speechless; the next day, editorial writers lavished praise on the Admiral for elevating political debate back to the once-elegant standard of Lincoln and Douglas. Within days, the *New York Times* saluted the Admiral for rising “above . . . debate,” adding: “Stockdale may not be able to impart little stinky numbers; he radiates character.” Simply by citing his version of the lost ideal of American debating, Stockdale had not only transformed himself into a hero, he had practically metamorphosed into a latter-day Lincoln, reducing Quayle and Gore to the role of squabbling infants—latter-day Douglasses, it was to be inferred.⁶

Of course, in reality the Lincoln-Douglas “joint meetings” were hardly as elevated as Stockdale and the *Times* recalled. In fact, they were barely restrained political free-for-alls: fiery, personal, furious—and therefore, for the thousands who crowded to witness them, irresistible. They remain even more so in their original, unedited, unvarnished form—precisely the way opposition stenographers heard them on the scene—even if one may also accept the logic that it was just as likely a Republican stenographer would garble a Democratic speech as it was that a loyal Democratic editor might enhance and improve it.

⁶ *New York Times*, October 16, 1992.

Which record, in the end, should we believe? The answer is both. The long-cherished transcripts, recorded and edited by the candidates' respective party newspapers, and preserved for the ages in innumerable books, remind us of how the aspirants themselves wanted their remarks to be remembered (especially in Lincoln's case—the editor always gets the last word). But the opposition transcripts may in the end come closer to the spirited informality of these three-hour marathons in which each tireless and resourceful candidate delivered his long speeches extemporaneously.

In the hope that the long-vanished, boisterous, magnetic political culture that spawned the Lincoln-Douglas debates will be accurately remembered, warts and all, this new edition of the alternative texts is offered at the dawn of a new national political season. We have come a long way since the unstructured, free-for-all debates that characterized pre-Civil War America. Not all the improvements have been for the better. Today's candidate "debates" require our carefully briefed political aspirants to provide little more than brief, vague replies, while omnipresent, nonpartisan moderators grimly discourage audience response. Politics in the age of Lincoln-Douglas demanded much more—more creativity and knowledge from the candidates, and more involvement and attention from its audiences.

They may not have been sedate, or as seamlessly delivered as the old, accepted records have long suggested, but the Lincoln-Douglas debates did attract huge crowds and helped provoke a robust voter turnout in the fall election. Perhaps if we allowed—or required—that modern politicians present their cases in ninety-minute impromptu speeches, off the cuff and straight from the heart, we would generate a similar response today. This might be the best way of all to preserve the magic of the Lincoln-Douglas debates; not simply by arguing about the stenographic transcripts, but by emulating their daring and spirit. In the meantime, it can do no harm to remember how the opposition heard Lincoln and Douglas. It can only help us vividly remember—and appreciate—a vanished age.

* * *

I owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the people who urged on the republication of this edition of the debates.

First and foremost, I thank the distinguished historian Pauline Maier, who was generous enough to write to me some months ago to tell me how much she missed having the book available to her students. Professor Maier even went on to mention the book in an article for *American Heritage Magazine* about important recent history books. She has offered much more praise and encouragement than I deserve, and I thank her sincerely for her kindness.

I am grateful, too, to all of the Civil War round tables, historical associations, and forums that have invited me over the years to expound on the subject of the Lincoln-Douglas debates. I have thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to speak about this book before the Stephen A. Douglas Association in Chicago, the Lincoln Group of New York, and the Lincoln Group of the District of Columbia, all of whose members welcomed me most cordially. I was also privileged to deliver papers on the Lincoln-Douglas debates at the 1993 Lincoln Home Colloquium in Springfield, Illinois, and the Civil War Round Table Associate's Conference on Lincoln the orator, at Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, in November 1993.

Thanks to Pete and Julia Brown, I have also had the great pleasure of discussing the book on a memorable Lincoln cruise aboard the historic *Delta Queen*, sponsored by HistoryAmerica tours. And those two uncanny, expert Lincoln-Douglas interpreters, George Buss and Rich Sokup, have not once but twice, in 1996 and 2003, invited me to discuss the debates at the historic town square in Freeport, Illinois, where the originals met for their second, and perhaps most famous, 1858 debate. What an honor it has been to stand where Lincoln and Douglas once stood, now in the shadow of the evocative commemorative statue by Lily Tolpo, and discuss their impact on American political history. I thank Rich and George for being such wonderful hosts, and Freeport journalist Olga Gize Carlile for reporting every word faithfully and enthusiastically.

I owe the biggest debt of all to Brian Lamb and C-SPAN. A few months after the first edition appeared, Brian picked up a copy in a Washington, D.C., bookstore, and invited me to discuss it on his weekly television series, *Booknotes*. During that program, he asked me if I thought the American public could ever again withstand—much less applaud—the kind of demanding political discourse that the Lincoln-Douglas debates required in 1858. In my “wisdom,” I

said no. But armed with a far better understanding of American culture than I do, Brian quickly replied that he believed I was wrong and would prove it.

To say that he proceeded to do so would be an understatement. C-SPAN went on to encourage, support, and broadcast, recreations of the debates in all seven of the Illinois towns in which the great debaters had first engaged each other. Huge throngs turned out, countless viewers tuned in, and the Lincoln-Douglas debates lived again—not in the glossy, imperfect national memory that had encouraged their sanitized reputation, but in their original, vivid form. I will never forget our days on the C-SPAN express train back into the nineteenth century, to the local participants, the actors, the crew, the historical advisors—and the chance to appear on camera at several of the events. Thank you, Brian Lamb, for rescuing the lost truth of the debates, and being generous enough to take me along for the ride.

Finally, much as an author might wish for his book to enjoy a new life, it takes a visionary publisher to make it happen. Saverio Procario of Fordham University Press is such a publisher, and much as I have treasured the opportunity to work closely with him on a number of projects, I am most grateful of all for the chance to do this one.

—Harold Holzer
Rye, New York
November 1, 2003

Preface

MORE THAN FORTY EDITIONS of the Lincoln-Douglas debates have been published since 1860. But in a sense, this is the first.

The idea—and the need—for this book arose from the effort to put an earlier book to bed. In the course of editing final page proofs for the 1990 volume *Lincoln on Democracy*, an anthology of speeches and writings collected under the direction of Governor Mario Cuomo, I began wondering about the fidelity of some of the texts that for so long had engaged the governor, our team of scholars, and me—not to mention the generations of historians who labored in the Lincoln vineyards before us.

Nagging doubts lingered for good reason: none of the original manuscripts of Abraham Lincoln's pre-presidential speeches has survived. Before entering the White House, Lincoln simply did not think it important to preserve them. Neither, apparently, did anyone else. Thus there is no surviving autograph version of his Lyceum speech, Cooper Union address, or House Divided speech, among other early triumphs.

And most vexing of all, where the fabled Lincoln-Douglas debates are concerned we do not even have any surviving handwritten notes or fragments of unquestionable authenticity. For purposes of assembling *Lincoln on Democracy*, we had relied—like earlier generations of editors—on period newspaper reprints of these speeches, some recorded on the spot by stenographers. But were these records always reliable? True, where Cooper Union was concerned, Lincoln not only supplied a manuscript to the typesetters, he proofread the results. But such was not always the case. Sometimes he had not read from a manuscript to begin with.

Speaking from text, Lincoln was perhaps the most eloquent orator of his age. But as an impromptu speaker, he could be dreadful. Notwithstanding his reputation as an engaging storyteller and spellbinding courtroom lawyer, an unprepared Lincoln could be a surprisingly hapless spouter of hollow banality. What is more, the record of such utterances is inherently suspect, since it relies on shorthand transcriptions, not authenticated texts. As historian Don E. Fehrenbacher discovered only recently—more than a century and a quarter after its delivery—the long-accepted newspaper printing of the House Divided speech featured a transposed, out-of-sequence paragraph that rendered some of its opening thoughts all but incomprehensible.

A review of the rest of the early Lincoln canon shows that even the well-deserved reputation of his Farewell Address to Springfield owed more to the text Lincoln composed after his journey got under way than to the less polished speech delivered to his neighbors and transcribed by the local newspaper while he spoke. Most of the public statements he subsequently delivered from the back of the trains carrying him to Washington, even allowing for his resolve to avoid discussing policy, seem today not only insubstantial but uninspired. They seemed equally so to a number of observers back in 1861. In more skillful hands, such talks might have served to reassure an anxious nation tottering on the brink of disunion and civil war. Instead they placated few, and irked many.

The presidency did little to add luster to Lincoln's rare bursts of spontaneity, now wisely curtailed. Even the twin Union triumphs at Gettysburg and Vicksburg on the eve of Independence Day in 1863 at first elicited only tortured syntax. In an impromptu speech from the White House, Lincoln could disguise neither his exuberance nor his clumsiness as he proceeded to belabor a brilliant idea. "How long ago

is it?” he asked, “—eighty odd years—since on the Fourth of July for the first time in the history of the world a nation by its representatives, assembled and declared as a self-evident truth that ‘all men are created equal.’” Not until he had four months more to ponder the victories was he able to recraft these thoughts—meticulously writing out several drafts until he was satisfied—into the unforgettable poetry of the Gettysburg Address: “Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forth upon this continent, a new nation, conceived in Liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.” As Lincoln had conceded at the White House that evening in July, this was “a glorious theme, and the occasion for a speech.” But, he admitted frankly, “I am not prepared to make one worthy of the occasion.” Unless he carefully wrote out his words in advance, he rarely was.

Seldom did he display these shortcomings more painfully than in responding to calls for one such impromptu speech the evening before he delivered his most famous address. Even in hallowed Gettysburg, Lincoln could do little more than sputter: “In my position it is somewhat important that I should not say any foolish things.” To which a voice in the crowd shot back: “If you can help it.” Admitted Lincoln in a self-deprecating reply: “It very often happens that the only way to help it is to say nothing at all.”

But there were times when Lincoln apparently could *not* help it, and it was the resulting archive of unrehearsed oratorical mediocrity that ultimately drew my attention to the Lincoln-Douglas debates of 1858, surely the most demanding extemporaneous exercise of Lincoln’s career. Given his lackluster record in unrehearsed oratory, how did he summon the skill to make cogent, hour-long speeches, along with ninety-minute rebuttals, and thirty-minute rejoinders, in his debates with Stephen A. Douglas? These events offered Lincoln a precious opportunity to reach his widest audience to date, but also posed grave dangers. Even if he was able to read his opening statements directly from text, which no witness ever suggested he did, Lincoln certainly could not hope to anticipate his opponent’s rebuttals and prepare rejoinders in advance. Yet the surviving published record of the debates suggests that Lincoln spoke flawlessly, sometimes inspiringly, each time he took his turn against Stephen A. Douglas—exhibiting a facility for resonant impromptu oratory he failed to evidence either before the debates or after. How was this possible?

It seemed likely that the answer might be found in the faded press

records of that 1858 campaign season, and that is where the research for this volume began: through the old Illinois newspapers that originally published so-called “exact” transcriptions of each debate; in the letters of both debaters in which they also debated the accuracy of these long-accepted transcripts; and through a prolonged dispute of the day, seldom recalled since, between party-affiliated newspapers, over whose published texts were more reliable. Contained therein was not only the elusive solution to the mystery but a clue to how the unexpurgated speeches could now be resurrected.

The result of the search is this new collection of long-ignored debate transcriptions, assembled for the first time since 1858 in an effort to “hear” again the true voices of these remarkable leaders, just as they were likely first heard in Illinois by the crowds who flocked to listen to them: not in the form of highly polished narrative prepared after the events for newspapers and books but as charged oratory designed to excite and persuade voters.

These hitherto ignored transcripts turn out to shed new light on Lincoln’s reputation as a public speaker, while compelling us to use this fresh evidence to reassess Stephen A. Douglas’s performance as well. And the texts illuminate more vividly than ever the volatile atmosphere of the debates themselves: the passionate responses by the crowds who heard them, and the debaters’ ability to rouse, amuse, and outrage them. Hopefully these unedited words—together with descriptions by period eyewitnesses of the hullabaloo that greeted them—will bring us closer than ever before to the drama of the most important political debates of American history, and the men who conducted them.

This was how they probably sounded, and this is how they should be remembered.

Acknowledgments

THIS PROJECT COULD NEVER have been undertaken, much less realized, without the invaluable help of a number of people whose efforts deserve more gratitude than I can possibly acknowledge adequately here.

First, Thomas F. Schwartz, curator of the Henry Horner Lincoln Collection at the Illinois State Historical Library in Springfield, helped facilitate the research by providing the original Illinois newspaper records that formed the basis for the transcripts reproduced in this volume. I am indebted to him for all his assistance, not to mention his forbearance when smeared xeroxes had to be rephotographed.

Wherever I turned, my colleagues in the Lincoln fraternity were ready and willing to help. My good friend and frequent coauthor Mark E. Neely, the director of the Lincoln Museum in Fort Wayne, supplied both enthusiasm and his usual invaluable critical reading of the text. His suggestions made this a better book. Another close friend, Frank J. Williams, president of the Abraham Lincoln Association, also read the text, and generously agreed to the publication of his wonderful painting

of the debaters in action. And Wayne C. Temple of Springfield shared many valuable insights on Lincoln's likely inspiration for the format of the debates.

I could never write about the Lincoln-Douglas debates without gratefully acknowledging too the inspiration provided me over the years by the greatest orator of our own age, Mario Cuomo, for whom I was privileged to work from 1984 to 1992. Not only does his eloquence hark back to an age in which all leaders were expected to inspire with their words, but ever since I first met him in 1977, we have enjoyed sharing our mutual fascination with Lincoln. Running for mayor of New York that year, he objected regularly to the frustrating restrictions of televised candidate debates, citing the Lincoln-Douglas legacy as a lost ideal of political confrontation. I never forgot his words, and it turns out they were right.

I am grateful also to Eamon Dolan, my editor at HarperCollins, who manages somehow to balance a writing stable that embraces historians as well as mystery writers, while maintaining enthusiasm for both. He has my thanks not only for encouraging this effort but for introducing me to the addictive works of another of "his" authors, Tony Hillerman, my hungry consumption of which ironically worked to delay delivery of this manuscript. Thanks also go to a onetime editor at HarperCollins, Amy Gash, who first brought this project to the attention of her former colleagues there; and to my indefatigable agent, Geri Thoma, who saw early and emphatically the value of presenting these long-hidden texts.

As always, I owe the biggest debt to my family for their patience and encouragement. My wife, Edith, not only endured the temporary redecoration of our home with two-by-three-foot copies of nineteenth-century newspapers but gave the text a thorough reading and offered important suggestions for improving it. I owe apologies to my daughters for spending more time with Lincoln than with them this past year; but twelve-year-old Meg managed to start middle school auspiciously without her father's guidance, and sixteen-year-old Remy had no help from me in preparing college applications, save for the writing of checks. She was admitted into Harvard anyway (Robert T. Lincoln's alma mater, I reminded her, to her annoyance), which helped much to assuage my guilt. Both girls also responded usefully to my occasional frenzied pleas for help with synonyms and adjectives I had difficulty recalling, and I hope they will recognize their contributions on these pages.

Finally, I must thank Janice Banks and Vince Lipani for their crucial

help, and especially Amy Varney-Kiet, who together with Cecilia Thomas squinted through the agonizing process of typing these debates from the minuscule print of the original newspapers. When she regains both her eyesight and her willingness to read again the materials she helped assemble, I hope Amy will be comforted by the knowledge that this project could not have been accomplished without her.

THE
LINCOLN-DOUGLAS
DEBATES

THE FIRST COMPLETE, UNEXPURGATED TEXT

INTRODUCTION



“THE PRAIRIES ARE ON FIRE,” reported a New York newspaper in 1858, gazing west to take the temperature of the most heated election contest in the nation.¹

In the summer of that turbulent year, as America slid perilously closer to the brink of disunion, two Illinois politicians seized center stage and held the national spotlight for two extraordinary months. Through the sheer force of their words, personalities, and ideas—not to mention the exuberance of their supporters—they transformed a statewide contest for the U.S. Senate into a watershed national disquisition on the contentious issue of slavery. They attracted tens of thousands of voters to their appearances, and newspaper reprints of their speeches became required reading for hundreds of thousands more. However imperfect that written record was—and its defects are the reason for this book—its immediate influence proved genuine and widespread. The eyes and ears of the entire nation turned to Illinois as the war of words intensified. It was the season of the Lincoln-Douglas debates.

Beginning in August and going on through mid-October, the nationally known forty-five-year-old, two-term Democratic incumbent, Senator Stephen A. Douglas, and his formidable challenger for reelection, ex-congressman Abraham Lincoln, a forty-nine-year-old Republican, met face-to-face publicly on seven memorable occasions before huge, ardent audiences throughout their state. Even as a brutal summer hot spell gave way to chill autumn winds, the enthusiastic partisans of “the Little Giant” and “Long Abe” kept thronging into parched open fields and bustling town squares to witness the remarkable encounters, as these mesmerizing orators argued the future of their troubled country. Through twenty-one hours of speeches, rebuttals, and rejoinders—all punctuated by choruses of cheers and jeers—the tall, awkward Lincoln, and the short, cocky Douglas offered exhaustive variations on their contrasting visions for America, one embracing life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness regardless of race, the other stressing government by and for white men only, and in perpetuity. By fall, their “thunder tones,” as Lincoln described them, were roiling the state and, increasingly, the nation. They galvanized public attention north as well as south, shaking the very foundations of what Lincoln called “the house divided.” Entering the fray as rivals for a Senate seat, they emerged as rivals for the highest political prize of all. As the *Richmond Enquirer* seemed to sense early in the campaign, theirs became “the great battle of the next Presidential election.”²

It all began with a challenge from the challenger. Since launching his Senate campaign in June, Abraham Lincoln had been frustratingly campaigning uphill against a better-financed, better-organized opponent. “His tactics,” Lincoln complained of Douglas, “. . . make it appear that he is having a triumphant entry into; and march through the country.” In response, perhaps recalling that four years earlier he had held his own while debating Douglas at Peoria over the controversial Kansas-Nebraska Act, Lincoln began trailing the senator through Illinois, responding publicly to his addresses, and thus, by his own account, getting “a concluding speech on him” every time. He heard Douglas speak in Chicago on July 9, and the following night delivered a ringing response from the same spot. And when Douglas spoke in Springfield eight days after that, Lincoln followed him with a lengthy reply only a few hours later. It was, he felt, “the very thing.”³

But the strategy began wearing thin. There were some occasions on which Lincoln felt constrained not to respond by “feelings of delicacy.”

Worse, the opposition press was beginning to ridicule him. Since there were “two very good circuses and menageries traveling through the state,” mocked one paper, why not have them “include a speech from Lincoln in their performances. In this way Lincoln could get good audiences and his friends be relieved from the mortification they all feel at his present humiliating position.” It was clearly time for Lincoln to try a different approach. The “*offensive*” was better than the “*defensive*,” he admitted to a supporter on July 20.⁴

Then on July 22, the pro-Lincoln Chicago *Daily Press and Tribune* came out with a provocative suggestion: “Let Mr. Douglas and Mr. Lincoln agree to canvass the State together, in the old western style.” A few days later, Lincoln issued a formal challenge to Douglas “for you and myself to divide time, and address the same audiences.” For his part, Douglas neither needed nor welcomed the proposal; such encounters could scarcely help a well-known incumbent, and they held out the frightening possibility of elevating Lincoln merely by providing him the opportunity to share platforms with him. But “the old western style” also dictated that Douglas could not easily decline, especially once the Republican press began editorializing that a candidate “who refused to speak in that way had no better reason than cowardice” for dodging the challenge.⁵

Still, Douglas did not immediately acquiesce. He seethed that Lincoln had waited until he had crowded his schedule with binding commitments. He fretted that a third candidate might soon enter the race “with no other purpose than to insure my defeat by dividing the Democratic Party for your benefit,” he wrote Lincoln, and he was not about to grant to a spoiler “the right to speak from the same stand” too. He was certainly not willing to debate a hundred, or even fifty, times, as Lincoln hoped.⁶

In the end, he had little choice but to “accommodate” his opponent, but Douglas would insist on making the terms: They would meet only once in each of the state’s nine congressional districts. And having already spoken—if not jointly, then consecutively—in two of them, with their remarks at Chicago and Springfield, Douglas would now consent only to seven more joint meetings. He also named the venues and dates: the county seats of Ottawa on August 21, Freeport on August 27, Jonesboro on September 15, Charleston on September 18, and then, after another hiatus, Galesburg on October 7, Quincy on October 13, and Alton on October 15. The schedule would leave plenty of room for

each candidate to campaign extensively on his own.⁷

For Lincoln, it would have to do. The only thing upon which he insisted now was “perfect reciprocity, and no more. I wish as much time as you, and that conclusions shall alternate. That is all.” The idea for rotating the opening speeches may have come from a fifteen-year-old book by Lincoln’s pastor friend, Rev. Dr. James Smith. His tome, *The Christian’s Defence*, which Lincoln kept in his modest library at home, included copious notes from its author’s 1841 debates on religion with a skeptic named C. G. Olmstead. For eighteen consecutive nights, these debaters had taken turns delivering one-hour opening addresses, two-hour rebuttals, and half-hour rejoinders. Lincoln may well have recalled this system of “perfect reciprocity” when he made his arrangements with Douglas in 1858. Whatever the inspiration for the system they ultimately adopted, within days of a chance meeting between the two on the campaign trail, the details were finalized. Each debate would last a total of three hours. The opening speaker would occupy an hour; then an hour and a half would be allotted for a reply, and finally a half hour given to the first speaker for a rejoinder. If there was a slight advantage, it would be Douglas’s: he would take the opening and closing positions at the first and final debates, and thus enjoy the last word on four occasions, to Lincoln’s three. Even so, to a supporter, Douglas worried: “I shall have my hands full.” However imperfectly, however reluctantly, the stage was finally set.⁸

Neither candidate could have been prepared for the overwhelming public response to come. Seldom before or since has political rhetoric elicited such sustained, fevered interest, or exerted such powerful or long-standing influence. Well attended and widely published at the time, reported not only in Illinois but throughout the country, the debates were also destined to be reprinted in their entirety in an edition engineered by Lincoln himself—and in innumerable volumes since. The legendary political encounters quickly earned—and have held ever since—an almost sacred place in both history and folklore. Arguably, the Lincoln-Douglas encounters are the most famous political debates ever held in the United States.

And yet the real Lincoln-Douglas debates have largely been lost to us, almost from the very moment they were conducted. In an effort to showcase the debaters to the best advantage, the raw power and unexpurgated spontaneity of the speakers were permanently sanitized by partisan stenographers, transcribers, and editors. Together they repro-

duced the speeches and rebuttals as they perceived their equally partisan readers wanted them preserved. Inevitably, their approved (and improved) versions of the debates became the basis of the permanent historical archive. It would be hyperbolic to suggest that the original record was suppressed, but inaccurate to deny that it was enhanced. The truth is, what Lincoln and Douglas said at their seven debates in 1858 was not then, nor has it been since, accurately reported. And what *was* printed has never been seriously questioned, perhaps for the reason, as historian Reinhard Luthin put it, that the Lincoln-Douglas debates have remained “vastly more admired than read.” Or possibly because readers simply remained ignorant of how the record was assembled.⁹

To understand how and why the distortions originally occurred requires an appreciation of the political culture of mid-nineteenth-century America, an atmosphere of enthusiastic, nearly unanimous public participation so vastly different from our own as to seem by comparison almost alien.

The mere idea today of summoning thousands of ordinary citizens to gather together outdoors, unsheltered and, more often than not, unseated, to observe political debates firsthand—much less expecting audiences to listen attentively to hours of speechifying—borders on the fantastic. But in 1858, spectators came from all over Illinois, and from nearby states as well, crowding fairgrounds, village streets, and once a vacant lot, in towns stretching from the cool northern reaches of the state near Wisconsin to the steamy river towns bordering the slaveholding South, just to hear a Democrat and a Republican debate slavery. Difficult as it may be in our more remote television age to imagine such frenzied public involvement, a century and a quarter ago, especially in the West, politics still offered sparsely populated communities not only the opportunity to take sides on crucial issues but their sole access to grand entertainment as well. Politics provided high drama and spirited fun to neighborhoods devoid of activities anywhere near as engaging or exciting. Ministers might hurl fire and brimstone from the local pulpit, but only on Sundays. The county fair set up only once a year. Visits by itinerant preachers were rare, and tours by traveling minstrel shows even rarer. But politics supplied day-in, day-out excitement, and with it the allure of all the other attractions combined.¹⁰

Particularly in the small towns that dotted the Illinois prairie, the pulse of politics and the heartbeat of community life throbbed as one; election fever was a year-round malady that infected its eager victims

with incurable enthusiasm. Public officials might be revered, voter turnout was nearly unanimous, and politics lured masses of celebrants to barbecues, Fourth of July picnics, fireworks displays, and stem-winder speeches that combined the fervor of the revival meeting, the spectacle of theater, and the passion of neighborly argument. "It is astonishing," one New York journalist marveled after a trip to Illinois, "how deep an interest in politics these people take." Yet even in this intoxicating milieu, Illinois had never experienced anything quite like the Lincoln-Douglas debates. It is somewhat ironic that the same political culture that made the encounters both possible and popular ultimately conspired to make their accurate recording unlikely.¹¹

That the campaign between Lincoln and Douglas quickly gripped all of Illinois in its thrall comes as no surprise. But even in Illinois, the impassioned response to the longtime arch-rivals broke new ground. Theirs were not mere political discussions but gala pageants: public spectacles fueled by picnic tables groaning with local fare; emblazoned with gaudy banners and astringently worded broadsides; and echoing with artillery salutes and martial music. On the days the events were staged, roads to debate sites were choked with wagons and horses as whole families crowded onto the scene. Hotels overflowed with guests, and those who could not book rooms slept on sofas in lobbies.

In Ottawa, scene of the first encounter, attendance swelled to more than double the permanent population. They came "by train, by canal-boat, by wagon, buggy, and on horseback." Lincoln arrived on a special train bulging with excited supporters. Douglas led a mile-long procession in a beautifully appointed head carriage, as crowds cheered him "from the sidewalks, from windows, piazzas, house-tops and every available standing point." At the second encounter, at Freeport, an "immense assemblage" of boosters met Lincoln at the depot, feted him at a levee, and "wheeled" him to the debate site in an open wagon drawn by six white horses. When the debates themselves got under way, one correspondent observed virtual "hand-to-hand conflict for even the meagerest . . . standing room." Once the speeches began, partisans interrupted continually with outbursts of applause and cheering, occasional heckling, and frequent shouts of "Hit him again," "That's the Doctrine," and "Give it to Him." At one encounter, a heckler shouted out his opinion that Lincoln was a fool, to which he quickly retorted, to gales of laughter: "I guess there are two of us" (an exchange, predictably, expunged from the record later). Audiences were fed with bar-

becued meat and ice cream, and both Democrats and Republicans accused each other of “keeping spirits up by pouring spirits down.” Inevitably, the scenes that erupted at the conclusion of each event often rivaled the oratory itself for intensity or humor. The rowdiness could sometimes drift over the edge of acceptability: once, between debates, enemies smeared Douglas’s carriage with what a horrified journalist could only bring himself to describe as “loathsome dirt,” referring undoubtedly to excrement. And on another occasion, Lincoln was unexpectedly borne off by exuberant supporters who failed to calculate their candidate’s extreme height, leaving Lincoln’s legs dangling unceremoniously “and his pantaloons pulled up so as to expose his underwear almost to his knees.” It was not unusual—even after standing on their feet much of the day for the festivities, either denied sufficient food and drink or bloated with an excess of both—for such overwrought partisans to flock to nearby locations once debates ended for still more boisterous celebrations, and sometimes more speeches as well. (Lincoln himself joined an audience after the first debate to hear yet another politician deliver yet another oration.) Even after the orators (and their listeners) were finally exhausted, the townspeople would invariably be kept awake all night by noisy, torchlit parades through the streets.¹²

Within this rollicking atmosphere, the press played a crucial role, but decidedly unlike the one the media perform today. Newspapers were not nonpartisan. They took sides—not only editorially but in day-to-day coverage, aiming not only to report but to persuade. And therein lies the essential clue to the elusiveness of the “real” Lincoln-Douglas debates.

This wildly different journalistic ethic was partly attributable to the economic realities of the newspaper business at midcentury, when the press depended largely on political organizations for survival. Alliance with a political party translated into guaranteed subscribers and lucrative legal and governmental advertisements. In return for this lifeblood of patronage, the press was expected to trumpet the party line. Thus the larger towns typically supported two opposing sheets. In Springfield, for example, the Illinois state capital where Lincoln still lived in 1858, and which Douglas had called home years earlier, the Democrats claimed one newspaper, the *Illinois State Register*, while the new Republican party had the *Illinois State Journal*. (Today they are merged, reflective of trends in our own times toward both commercial retrenchment and political neutrality.) Similarly, in the bustling lake city of Chicago, Democrats

read the Chicago *Daily Times*, and Republicans the Chicago *Daily Press and Tribune*. In the days before celluloid campaign buttons and bumper stickers testified to political allegiances, Americans made known their party loyalties by the newspaper they carried.

Partisan reporting was hardly confined to the opinion columns. During the debates, newspapers uninhibitedly lauded the candidates of their choice on their news pages and routinely vilified opponents, sometimes poisoning the air with slanders that in earlier times provoked duels and today might inspire not votes but litigation. Their crowd estimates were reliable only in their consistent unreliability, owing far more to fancy, puffery, and exaggeration than to head counting. Accounts of audience response differed markedly according to which journal purported to hear it: to Democratic reporters, Douglas was always vigorously cheered and Lincoln ignored or jeered; Republican journalists heard approbation only for Lincoln and somehow failed to distinguish applause for Douglas. As for the party faithful who turned out to welcome candidates into town, they were always vast in number and uncontrollable in their excitement—that is, if they were being described by the loyal party journal. If the rival newspaper was filing the report, then the Lincoln crowds were inevitably abolitionist, foreign-born, or dirt-poor, and the Douglas boosters Irish, drunk, or both. In these manifestly prejudiced reports, one debater invariably triumphed, while the other not only faltered but sometimes dissolved into tremors or had to be physically restrained from violent interruptions. In a way, the nineteenth-century press functioned much as today's paid campaign "spin doctors" do, dispensing adjective-laden instant interpretation in an attempt to make each defeat seem a draw, each draw a victory, and each victory a rout.

From the outset, the Democratic and Republican journals in Chicago treated the Lincoln-Douglas debates as worthy not only of this intensive and openly biased old-style coverage but also of something relatively new: start-to-finish transcription. As a result, a few days after each debate, citizens throughout the state were able to read, verbatim, the speeches that the respective candidates had offered face-to-face. Or so the readers believed.

Of course, the requisite electronic technology had yet to be developed to record flawlessly what candidates said. Neither audiences nor transcribers enjoyed the benefit of the electronic amplification or access to tape recording we take for granted today. The "recording" process

could be daunting. Stenographers hastily took copious notes, transcribers transformed the hieroglyphics into words, and typesetters turned the words into newspaper copy. In a way, the demands placed on the shorthand reporters inhibited subterfuge: facing intense pressure to catch every word, a stenographer hardly had the opportunity to distort or enhance what he was hearing as he labored mightily merely to keep track of the furious pace of debate. But that did not mean transcribers and editors could not introduce such enhancements later.

The record suggests that they did. Somewhere along the fevered trail between stenography, transcription, and composition—even though so-called “overnight” debate reports still took two or three days to get into print*—a transfiguration occurred. On the Democratic side, supportive editors apparently gave careful critical reading to Douglas transcripts, deleting ungrammatical sentences, improving stylistic transgressions, plugging up run-on sentences, and extending fragmentary thoughts . . . and in the interest of time, left Lincoln’s portion alone. The Democratic journal would invariably boast a polished Douglas transcript and a rather rough-hewn Lincoln text.

In turn, sympathetic Republican editors were practicing much the same dishonesty in the name of “Honest Abe.” Performing comparable cosmetic surgery on the words of their candidate, they subjected his debate transcripts to similarly rigorous editing, this time printing the Douglas texts verbatim, flaws and all. One odd result of the subterfuge was that only Democrats got to read the unexpurgated Lincoln, and only Republicans the unedited Douglas. Around the state and country, like-minded party organs republished the respective Chicago reports without question. Thus the party faithful never really enjoyed unedited print access to the candidate of their choice as he truly sounded in debate. One had to be there.

*Overnight transcriptions did not always live up to their name. The debate speeches were not published until two or three days after each meeting, suggesting that ample time was allowed for typesetting—and editing. This was the publishing schedule: Ottawa, August 21, published in the *Daily Times* and the *Press and Tribune* on August 23; Freeport, August 27, published in both newspapers on August 30; Jonesboro, September 15, published in both papers on September 17; Charleston, September 18, published in both papers September 21; Galesburg, October 7, published in both papers on October 9; Quincy, October 13, published in both papers October 15; and Alton, October 15, published in the *Times* on October 17 and the *Tribune* on October 18. Party newspapers across the country in turn reprinted the transcripts based on these Chicago reports.

Issues were never compromised in this enterprise: readers knew these leaders and their views too well. But in the process of bringing order to the chaos of unscripted stump oratory, immediacy fell victim to the demands of high style, and the spontaneous magic of these debates was suffocated. Later, when only the edited adaptations were transferred from newspaper to book, they became an immutable part of the record, enhancements and all.

If such was the case, a modern reader might reasonably inquire, why didn't editors and politicians complain at the time? In fact, they did. The Democrats criticized Republican transcripts of Douglas's speeches because they so obviously lacked the polish *their* editors lavished upon them. And Republicans cried foul over the Democratic record of Lincoln's writings for they, too, appeared without the embellishments they had crafted for them retrospectively. Of course, both sides failed to renounce, or even admit guilt for, the chauvinistic editorial work they were performing for their respective candidates. But how else can we account for the far more realistic texts—complete with pauses, shifts in reasoning, inconclusive thoughts, and colloquialisms—to be found only on the pages of “rival” transcripts: the unedited Democratic version of Republican Lincoln's talks, and the untouched Republican version of Democrat Douglas's (the very texts provided in this book)?

II

The Lincoln-Douglas debates were the first sustained political encounters to inspire so-called “phonographic” reporting, and in this milestone lay the key to their early and enduring fame, as well as their ultimate distortion. At first, the Chicago *Press and Tribune* placed coverage of the encounters solely in the hands of a twenty-four-year-old journalist named Horace White. But White discovered that the Douglas camp had employed two shorthand reporters, Henry Binmore and James B. Sheridan, “whose duty it was to ‘write it up’ in the columns.” White quickly recognized “the necessity of counteracting or matching that force,” so the *Press and Tribune* dispatched Robert Roberts Hitt, “the pioneer” of this “new feature in journalism in Chicago,” to assume the additional responsibility.¹³

By the time the debates got under way, both newspapers were fully committed to utilizing verbatim reporting and fully organized for prompt transcription and publication. The three men on the cutting

edge of the new process have been largely forgotten by history, but they are principal characters in the story of the real Lincoln-Douglas debates.

Henry Binmore of the pro-Douglas Chicago *Times* was a twenty-five-year-old Englishman who perfected a form of shorthand so individualized he boasted that it could not be transcribed by anyone but himself. At the outset of the 1858 campaign, he was employed by the St. Louis *Republican* (another Democratic organ, despite its name), and his reports on Douglas's early speeches impressed the *Times* enough to hire him to record the debates. For backup, the paper imported James B. Sheridan, who perfected his phonographic reporting skills at a special school in Philadelphia, later taking a job with the influential *Press*, a local newspaper whose owner supported Douglas in his political battles with the Buchanan administration. The publisher went on to dispatch Sheridan to Illinois to cover the Douglas campaign, and there the *Times* retained him to help Binmore record the debates.¹⁴

On the Republican side, transcription became the sole responsibility of Hitt, a twenty-four-year-old, Illinois-born future congressman. Educated at what is now DePauw University in Indiana, Hitt opened his own office in Chicago in 1856 and quickly became that city's leading shorthand reporter, gaining regular employment in the courts and newspapers. He had transcribed Lincoln speeches in the past, and by the year of the debates was serving as official stenographer of the Illinois legislature. Like Binmore of the *Times*, Hitt also had an assistant on the debate trail, but nothing is known about him except that he was a French Canadian named Laramine whose job was to transcribe Hitt's notes.¹⁵

These phonographic reporters were reliable professionals, but it soon became apparent to politicians and ordinary readers alike that their debate transcripts differed substantially once in print. *Tribune* "verbatim" accounts of the debates magically transformed Lincoln's occasionally bumpy impromptu prose into seamless, cogent writing while presenting Douglas's words as informal and coarse. *Times* reports, in turn, abbreviated Douglas's windier phrases and also diluted some of his venom, frequently deleting the inflammatory adjective from one of his favorite attack phrases, "Black Republican," or changing his use of "nigger" to "negro." When angry Republicans began complaining that their own man was emerging as incomprehensible in the same *Times* renditions, the newspaper snapped back editorially that the Lincoln

followers “were ashamed of his poor abilities and wanted to divert attention from them, under the cry of mutilation and fraud.” Republican stenographer Hitt may have provided the earliest clue to the origin of such discrepancies when, recalling the debates thirty-five years later, he admitted: “I was employed to report them on the Republican side.” That is precisely what he did, just as Binmore and Sheridan did the same for the Democratic side.¹⁶

Hitt went to his grave insisting that his transcripts of Lincoln’s debate speeches were never significantly altered before going to press. “I mention this,” he told an interviewer in 1893, “as it was often charged at that time in the fury of partisan warfare that Mr. Lincoln’s speeches were doctored and almost re-written before they were printed; that this was necessary because he was so petty a creature in ability, in thought, in style, in speaking when compared with the matchless Douglas.” Why, right in the middle of the Quincy meeting, hadn’t Hitt faithfully dispatched his assistant to rush the notes for the first half of the debate to Chicago? Far from rewriting it, “I first saw the work printed in a newspaper,” Hitt claimed, adding: “Mr. Lincoln never saw the report of any of the debates.” Left unanswered was the question of whether either the stenographer or the candidate could reliably prove that no one else subsequently provided such editing—and whether what the *Tribune* ultimately published truly reflected exactly what Hitt had recorded from the speakers’ platforms. Survivors like Hitt, called on years after Lincoln’s death to feed the public’s insatiable appetite for stories about the great man, seldom had anything disparaging to report; but their generosity probably owed more to Lincoln’s subsequent elevation to national sainthood than to flawless recollection. For as the rival *Times* saw it back in 1858, these same *Tribune* transcriptions seemed to feature “whole paragraphs of which Lincoln’s tongue was innocent.”¹⁷

The Douglas paper launched a campaign to promote its own equally suspect record virtually as soon as the ink had dried on publication of the very first debate. Its highly polished Douglas transcript of Ottawa, they insisted, was “printed . . . literally,” explaining: “There is no orator in America more correct in rhetoric, more clear in ideas, more direct in purpose, in all his public addresses, than Stephen A. Douglas. That this is so, is not our fault, but rather it is the pride of the Democracy of Illinois and of the Union.” If the Republicans were howling over its version of Lincoln’s performance at Ottawa, it was only because “they dare not allow Lincoln to go into print in his own dress; and abuse us,

the *TIMES*, for reporting him literally.” The way the Douglas organ saw it, anyone who heard Lincoln at Ottawa “must have been astonished at the report of that speech as it appeared in the *Press and Tribune*.” It went on:

We did not attempt, much, to “fix up” the bungling effort; that was not our business. Lincoln should have learned, before this, to “rake after” himself—or rather to supersede the necessity of “raking after” by taking heed to his own thoughts and expressions. If he ever goes into the United States Senate—of which there is no earthly possibility—he will have to do that; in the congressional arena, the words of debaters are snatched from their lips, as it were, and immediately enter into and become a permanent part of the literature of the country. But it seems, from the difference between the two versions of Lincoln’s speech, that the Republicans have a candidate for the Senate of whose bad rhetoric and horrible jargon they are ashamed, upon which before they would publish it, they called a council of “literary” men, to discuss, reconstruct, and re-write.

The *Times* was adamant. “We never touched a line,” it insisted of its Lincoln transcript. Its version of his speech was exactly “as transcribed by the reporter, positively the speech he delivered.” Unable to resist adding insult to injury, the newspaper went on to snicker: “Any one who has ever heard Lincoln speak . . . must know that he cannot speak five grammatical sentences in a row.”¹⁸

Without responding specifically to the charge of “raking over” the Lincoln speeches, Republican newspapers went on the offensive. Citing “outrageous frauds,” one journal counted 180 “mutilations” in a Chicago *Times* Lincoln transcript, and predicted that “an action for libel would hold against these villains,” adding: “They richly deserve the prosecution.” To the *Tribune*, “the whole aim has been to blunt the keen edge of Mr. Lincoln’s wit, to mar the beauty of his most eloquent passages, and to make him talk like a booby, a half-witted numbskull.” As the local *Daily Whig* charged after the Quincy debate, “Douglas carries around with him a reporter by the name of Sheridan, whose business it is to garble the speeches of Mr. Lincoln and amend and elaborate those of Mr. Douglas.” A close inspection of the surviving transcripts reveals no such wholesale sabotage, yet even after the October 7 Galesburg debate, the *Tribune* was continuing to insist that the

latest examples of alleged *Times* mutilation left Lincoln's words so "shamefully and outrageously garbled" and "emasculated" that if doctoring prose was a crime, "the scamp whom Douglas hires to report Lincoln's speeches would be a ripe subject for the Penitentiary." Their own transcribers, they boasted, were neither "hired puffers nor paid libelers," and their impartial reports had consistently won even Douglas's approval. "No complaint has been entered or exceptions taken to the accuracy and fairness of these reports," the paper contended.¹⁹

Of course, Douglas's newspaper had in reality been complaining loudly, and three days before the final debate at Alton, protested anew that the *Tribune* was not only routinely marring Douglas's speeches but, just as important, brazenly "re-writing and polishing the speeches of . . . poor Lincoln," who, they jabbed, "requires some such advantage."²⁰

The earliest scholar of the Lincoln-Douglas debates saw a simple explanation for the wholesale discrepancies. Edwin Erle Sparks, who researched the transcripts for a useful fiftieth-anniversary edition in 1908, conceded: "Quite naturally the Democratic reporters did not exercise the same care" with "the utterances of Mr. Lincoln as with those of Mr. Douglas, and *vice versa*." Left unsaid was precisely how such "care" had manifested itself in the bowdlerized partisan records. Citing White's reminiscences, Sparks assigned additional blame to "the lack of accommodations for writing, the jostling of the crowds of people, and the occasional puffs of wind which played havoc with sheets of paper." But Sparks's book presented the resulting "official" transcripts anyway—as have editors and historians ever since—even though it seems clear that behind the old charges of fraud and the shrill protests of innocence, both newspapers did precisely the same thing: they methodically "raked over" their man's flawed transcripts.²¹

Those who benefited the most from "raking over" steadfastly refused to acknowledge its existence, at least where their own words were concerned. But even in denying collusion in the friendly editing of his own transcripts—"The first I saw of my speeches, after delivering them, was in the *Press & Tribune*," he insisted—Lincoln could not conceal his suspicion that Douglas's "two hired reporters . . . probably revised their manuscripts before they went to press." Lincoln's old friend Henry Clay Whitney remembered that Lincoln was careful never to vouch for the reliability of his *Tribune* record. He was simply willing to see them published "by *accepting* the *Tribune*'s version of *his* speeches, and the

Times' versions of *Douglas*' speeches." Douglas himself pointed out later that the debates had been conducted "in the open air to immense crowds of people, and in some instances, in stormy and boisterous weather, when it was impossible for the reporters to hear distinctly and report literally." In his equally damning judgment, all texts reprinted later in book form were "imperfect, and in some respects erroneous"—including his own. He too yearned for the chance of "revising and correcting" them.²²

Lincoln had had one such chance in the past, and, revealingly, seized it, demonstrating a perfect willingness to be edited, provided the result could help him. Four years before the debates, the same Horace White took down one of his speeches, displaying "absolute fidelity to ideas," the reporter admitted, but no more than "commendable fidelity to language." Lincoln protested not at all. "Well, those are my views," he drawled when he read the report, "and if I said anything on the subject, I must have said substantially that, but not nearly so well as that." Besides, Lincoln added, he retained "but a faint recollection of any portion" of the speech himself. Like all campaign orations, he explained, it was "necessarily extemporaneous"—just like the debates.²³

Carefully read, even the newspaper columns themselves occasionally provided such frank admissions. The *Times*, for example, in the midst of maintaining that it had published the debates "exactly as . . . delivered," admitted freely that its proofreader had corrected "wanton violations of the rules of grammar" whenever he could do so "without destroying the sense." By the same token, as an old man, Horace White finally let slip that in proofreading the Hitt transcripts for publication, he had yielded to "the temptation to *italicise* a few passages in Mr. Lincoln's speeches, where his manner of delivery had been especially emphatic." What's more, in those "few cases where confusion on the platform, or the blowing of the wind, had caused some slight hiatus or evident mistake in catching the speaker's words," Hitt further admitted to making a few "changes." How often did the wind blow away a point, or a hiatus drown out a syllogism? White never specified, leaving the unexpurgated "opposition" texts of the Lincoln-Douglas debates the sole source of the elusive answers. The only concession White would offer was that there was "no foundation" for the early charges that the opposition *Times* had mutilated Lincoln's speeches. They simply "took more pains with Mr. Douglas's speeches," he explained, just as the *Tribune* did with Mr. Lincoln's. The gaps in the Douglas transcripts had

merely been “straightened out by his own reporters, who would feel no responsibility for the rough places in Mr. Lincoln’s”—as if straightening out the “rough places” was truly their responsibility to begin with.²⁴

III

Given the partisan atmosphere that dictated the press’s unwillingness either to see or to present any evidence of their candidates’ flaws, is it possible to know how the debaters really performed on the stump? Happily, contemporaries left a rich archive of reminiscences that captured for posterity the almost comically divergent forms and styles of the tall, angular Lincoln and the short, combative Douglas.

“Two men presenting wider contrasts,” a New York newspaperman observed, “could hardly be found as the representatives of the two great parties”: Douglas, “a short, thick-set, burly man, with large round head, heavy hair, dark complexion, and fierce bull-dog bark . . . proud, defiant, arrogant, audacious,” and Lincoln, “the opposite . . . tall, slender and angular, awkward even, in gait and attitude. . . . In repose, I must confess that ‘Long Abe’s’ appearance is *not* comely. But stir him up and the fire of his genius plays on every feature.” Lincoln needed all the fire he could summon to match his incendiary foe. Even Lincoln partisans like the *Tribune*’s Horace White could praise the senator’s “unsurpassed powers of debate,” admitting: “He could make more out of a bad case . . . than any other man this country ever produced.” Another contemporary likened Douglas to a prizefighter, citing his “pluck, quickness, and strength,” while Lincoln’s friend and biographer Isaac N. Arnold grudgingly credited Douglas with “an iron will” and “great personal magnetism” wrapped up in a style that was “bold, vigorous . . . aggressive and at times even defiant.” Arnold had to concede that Douglas was every bit Lincoln’s equal—except in “wit and humor,” where Lincoln enjoyed “a great advantage.” Douglas, in turn, did not underestimate Lincoln. He reportedly confessed that Lincoln’s “droll ways and dry jokes” made him nothing less than “the best stump speaker . . . in the West.” Concluded the Little Giant: “If I beat him my victory will be hardly won.”²⁵

Many eyewitnesses to the debates went on to share their personal impressions of the encounters, like the sixteen-year-old boy who wiggled under the legs of some elderly farmers to get close to the speakers’ platform at Ottawa. He later remembered Douglas as “leonine” in

aspect, looking for all the world like “one born to command.” Lincoln, on the other hand, while “gracious and smiling all through his two speeches,” seemed “the very opposite in appearance and manner to Douglas.” In oratory, the youngster thought Douglas “never lacked for words and uttered them with a force of speech calculated to carry conviction to his hearers. He made few gestures and these were graceful; an emphatic shake of the head and rather long black hair often ended a sentence.” Lincoln, in turn, was “fluent, persuasive, and logical” in his presentation. He spoke, Horace White conceded, “in the accent and pronunciation peculiar to his native state, Kentucky”: *Mr. Chairman* would come out as *Mr. Cheermun*; there sounded more like *thar*. But Lincoln made up for Douglas’s superior elocution with dogged preparation. He wrote out long fragments. He consulted almost daily on the campaign trail with Horace and other party loyalists. Meanwhile, back in Springfield, he kept his law partner, William H. Herndon, “busy hunting up old speeches and gathering facts and statistics at the State Library.” Recalled Herndon: “I made liberal clippings bearing in any way on the questions of the hour” and “sent books forward to him” on request. Kept in Lincoln’s coat pocket thereafter, “to be drawn upon whenever the exigencies of debate required it,” was a six-by-four-inch leather book with a brass clasp, in which Lincoln pasted not only newspaper articles but the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence, along with a section of a Henry Clay oration and the opening of his own House Divided speech to the Convention that nominated him for Senator—“all the ammunition,” Herndon remembered, “Mr. Lincoln saw fit to gather in preparation for his battle with Stephen A. Douglas.”²⁶

Not even potent ammunition, however, could make up for Lincoln’s distinct disadvantages in appearance and manner. One of the last surviving witnesses to the final debate at Alton would recall forty years later “the tall, gaunt” Lincoln at first strikingly “ungraceful in his gestures,” quite unlike the “short, thickset, and much more graceful Douglas,” who kept Lincoln’s House Divided speech in a little notebook of his own, frequently producing it to recite (and assail) his opponent’s words in his own vividly contrasting voice and style. Yet even Lincoln’s Kentucky twang, the Alton witness insisted, could echo with “an animation that bound the audience with a spell. . . . His tones rang out clear,” while Douglas, exhausted by the long campaign, “sounded like . . . a mastiff giving short, quick barks.” A small-town newspaper editor who

attended the earlier Freeport debate, however, was aghast when he first caught sight of Lincoln in his “rusty-black Prince Albert coat with somewhat abbreviated sleeves.” The bizarre image was made even more comical when, every so often, Lincoln would suddenly “bend his knees so they would almost touch the platform, and then . . . shoot himself up to his full height, emphasizing his utterances in a very forcible manner.”²⁷

To no less discerning—and presumably, hostile—an observer than Harriet Beecher Stowe, Stephen A. Douglas could claim “two requisites of a debater—a melodious voice and a clear, sharply defined enunciation.” Another contemporary never forgot the “wrathful frown” Douglas wore in debate, which he punctuated by “defiantly shaking his head . . . clenching his fists and stamping his feet.” Hearing the Little Giant, even a Lincoln man would admit to moments when he was “completely carried away with his masterful and fascinating manner.” To a young Douglas admirer, the orator cast his spell with a voice that “rose and fell with the effortless volume of a great organ tone.” The secret to Lincoln’s eloquence, on the other hand, writer George H. Putnam remembered, “lay in the strength of his logical facility, his supreme power of reasoning.” But “the first utterance of his voice was not pleasant to the ear,” admitted Putnam, “the tone being harsh and the key too high.” Only when his speech was well along did the voice gain “a natural and impressive modulation,” illuminated by an “earnest look from the deeply-set eyes.” Herndon verified that it took several minutes of outdoor public speaking before his partner’s voice lost its “shrill, piping, unpleasant” timbre and “mellowed into a more harmonious and pleasant sound.” But Lincoln “never acted for stage effect,” Herndon added, “. . . never sawed the air nor rent space into tatters as some orators do.” Douglas may have “electrified” audiences with his “majestic bearing,” but Lincoln won them over eventually with his “logic and appeal to manhood.” What was more, observed Herndon, when Lincoln turned during the debates to the subject dearest to him—the Declaration of Independence—“his little gray eyes flashed in a face aglow . . . [and] his uneasy and diffident manner sunk themselves beneath the wave of righteous indignation that came sweeping over him. Such was Lincoln the orator.” It took a more impartial observer to notice also that Lincoln sometimes “stopped for repairs before finishing a sentence.”²⁸

One of the best accounts of the two debaters in action was left by the

newspaperman Henry Villard, a Lincoln admirer who covered the encounter at Ottawa, and painted a vivid picture of the combatants in action at their first joint meeting:

The Democratic spokesman commanded a strong, sonorous voice, a rapid, vigorous utterance, a telling play of countenance, impressive gestures, and all the other arts of the practiced speaker. As far as all external conditions were concerned, there was nothing in favor of Lincoln. He had a lean, lank, indescribably gawky figure, an odd-featured, wrinkled, inexpressive, and altogether uncomely face. He used singularly awkward, almost absurd, up-and-down and sidewise movements of his body to give emphasis to his arguments. His voice was naturally good, but he frequently raised it to an unnatural pitch. Yet the unprejudiced mind felt at once that, while there was on the one side a skillful dialectician and debater arguing a wrong and weak cause, there was on the other a thoroughly earnest and truthful man, inspired by sound convictions in consonance with the true spirit of American institutions. There was nothing in all Douglas' powerful effort that appealed to the higher instincts of human nature, while Lincoln always touched sympathetic chords.²⁹

IV

That either candidate could communicate “the higher instincts of human nature”—or make himself understood at all—by the end of the grueling Senate campaign was a tribute to herculean endurance. The debates were even more physically demanding on the speakers than on their audiences, and what's more, the joint meetings constituted only a small part of the rigors they endured. Surviving recollections like Villard's have helped fuel a number of stubborn myths about the debates, including the reigning misconception that the staged encounters constituted the entire campaign for the Senate, and second, that they elevated the level of political debate to a lofty plane: a high-water mark in the golden age of political discourse seldom equaled before or since. Neither legend is supported by the facts.

The formal debates represented only a fraction of the candidates' overall efforts, although no other part of their campaigns attracted nearly as much attention, then or since. Both Lincoln and Douglas stumped the state tirelessly, delivering long orations to large crowds in

the nondebate towns, repeating and refining the mantras that would become familiar elements of the speeches and rebuttals at their joint meetings. In all, Lincoln made at least 60 speeches during the 1858 race, and Douglas, by his own count, 130. Both crisscrossed the Illinois prairies until they had covered more than 4,300 miles apiece. Lincoln alone logged 350 miles by boat, 600 by carriage, and 3,400 by rail. Douglas preferred train travel—he had his own special car lavishly fitted out for the purpose, while Lincoln journeyed by ordinary coach. The senator occasionally traveled with his dazzling wife, Adele, and a sole staff aide—a rarity in the 1850s—a male secretary whose presence some detractors found ostentatious enough to report it disparagingly in the press. Lincoln, on the other hand, prudently left his troublesome wife, Mary, at home (she joined him only for the final debate), boasted no retinue of campaign advisers (except for partisan journalists), and seemed content merely to meet strangers and swap stories on the long trips from village to village. Not surprisingly, the challenger spent only \$1,000 on his reelection bid, the incumbent a staggering fifty times more.³⁰

As for the tone of debate, perhaps the best that can be said is that the meetings offered ideal opportunities for political discourse, but not always the lofty rhetoric such forums might have inspired. The unedited texts of the debates reveal with pellucid new clarity that the level of rhetoric by both of the 1858 candidates was seldom as majestic as folklore suggests. Defining statements, ringing perorations, and new ideas were very much the exception. The speakers attacked each other and defended themselves with biting humor, bitter sarcasm, and hellish fury, but seldom appealed—as generous eyewitnesses remembered—purely to “logic.” In fact, the unaltered transcripts seem more startlingly than ever to confirm that the majority of time at each encounter was devoted to character attacks and conspiracy charges, replete with personal insults and name-calling, and not to a high-minded exploration of issues. In unadulterated form, the speeches seem especially targeted to appeal to their immediate audiences—the excited crowds ringing the speakers’ platforms and frequently erupting with hurrahs and harassment—and not to the buyers of newspapers or books. Satisfying reader demands would be left to others, later. Nor did the encounters often provide the elusive “something new” that television so relentlessly requires of modern political debates before anointing them as newsworthy, much less equal to the Lincoln-Douglas tradition. Excep-

tional interludes occurred—fresh charges, novel rebuttals, soaring perorations, engaging humor, slips of the tongue—but for the most part, the only “smoking gun” at the Lincoln-Douglas debates was the brass cannon that the Douglas forces transported to each city and fired noisily whenever their candidate scored a particularly good “hit” on Lincoln.

Of course, Illinois voters were by then largely familiar with both the messages and the messengers. Lincoln and Douglas had been arguing the nuances of their respective positions for years. They had debated publicly in 1854, when Douglas first championed the Kansas-Nebraska Act, a law that overturned the thirty-four-year-old Missouri Compromise and opened territories acquired in the Louisiana Purchase to the possibility of slavery. Then and thereafter, Douglas advocated a credo known as “popular sovereignty,” which held that citizens of every new territory had the inherent right to vote slavery up or down for themselves. It was, he said, a sacred right of self-government. Lincoln opposed “squatter sovereignty,” as he sometimes referred to it derisively, pointing out that it enabled a small cadre of slaveholders to surge into a new region and forge a skewed majority for slavery that would institutionalize bondage long before large numbers of settlers arrived. Was it fair, he asked, to bind future generations of pioneers to the vote of a handful of zealots? Lincoln contended that slavery was a wrong which the nation’s founders had earmarked for extinction, that it ought not to be extended into new territories under any circumstances. Douglas insisted the question was always best left to local areas to decide.³¹

By and large, all twenty-one hours of debate between Lincoln and Douglas in 1858 radiated from this crucible of contention. The two never discussed tariffs, land grants, internal improvements, or the growing needs of both farm and factory communities—only the intersecting crisis points of slavery and union, in all their imaginable variations, save for one: the future of black people in white America. Of course, all Illinois voters, and most likely nearly all the people who witnessed the debates in 1858, were white. And besides, as historian David M. Potter pointed out, Douglas may have cared a great deal about slavery, but he cared very little about the slaves. As for Lincoln, facing the prospect of a free black population in America’s future, he could do no better than admit: “If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do.” Nonetheless, Douglas predictably charged that Lincoln was an abolitionist who covertly harbored sympathy for equal rights for blacks. Lincoln denied it, and claimed, in turn, to see in popular sovereignty

proof of Douglas's collusion in a plot to make slavery "perpetual and universal." As evidence, he cited not only Kansas-Nebraska but the explosive Dred Scott Supreme Court decision. That landmark 1857 ruling had not only declared that blacks could never be citizens, it opened up the possibility of expanding slavery by affirming property rights of slave owners no matter where they transported their chattel. Douglas supported the decision, despite the fact that it promised to outlaw popular sovereignty in its wake, citing the inviolability of all Supreme Court rulings; Lincoln attacked it as factually flawed and fatally illogical, and urged that the decision be overturned.³²

When not debating slavery, the candidates occupied much of their debate time haranguing each other on purely diversionary points: Lincoln's earlier opposition to the Mexican War, Douglas's gaffe in erroneously recalling Lincoln's support for a radical Springfield Republican platform he had neither signed nor endorsed (but probably did not oppose), a battle over which of the two was the true heir of the founding fathers or of the late hero Henry Clay, Douglas's so-called moral indifference to slavery, Lincoln's supposed habit of changing his positions to suit different audiences in the northern and southern regions of the state, and a maze of alleged political conspiracies and plots. The debates frequently turned on personal, not political issues, and these distractions have never been more apparent than they are in the unedited transcripts.

Yet the debaters were capable too of examining with passion and persuasiveness both the nation's rich legacy and its imperiled future, drawing strikingly different visions of each. One of the most important—and perhaps the most memorable—ongoing battles of the Lincoln-Douglas debates came over interpreting the Declaration of Independence. To Lincoln, the inalienable rights it guaranteed were designed for every living person, white or black, free or slave, at least as far as they assured the basic opportunity to eat the bread earned with one's own hands. Douglas countered that America "was established on the white basis . . . for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever." He attempted to portray Lincoln as a closet abolitionist masquerading as a moderate. Lincoln answered that it was possible to oppose slavery without favoring "amalgamation"—the period word for race mixing. As the debates progressed, Douglas often resorted to such surly race-baiting that the modern reader may well cringe to see it spelled out on these pages. Still, even Lincoln used the word "nigger"

in the encounters, though not as often as his opponent. It is useful to keep in mind that in the Illinois of 1858, racism was firmly institutionalized in law and in the constitution; only ten years earlier, its citizens had voted to bar blacks from its borders altogether. Lincoln and Douglas both reflected prevailing racist views, yet for all their biases and frequent use of ugly words so discordant to modern ears, each candidate stood only on the moderate rim of the political spectrum within his time, place, and party. There were Republicans more progressive (and others more conservative) on race than Lincoln, and Democrats for more reactionary than Douglas.

The debates had political as well as moral dimensions, offering both men the opportunity to fight for the middle ground in the battle for undecided votes in the swing counties of central Illinois. It was a given long before their first meeting that the vast majority of southern voters sympathetic to slavery would cast their ballots for Douglas, and antislavery men in the northern counties, for Lincoln. The election would be decided among those who identified themselves with neither faction.

In this struggle, Lincoln found himself at some disadvantage. Douglas had earlier broken with the pro-Southern wing of his party, and his president, James Buchanan, over the pro-slavery Lecompton Constitution proposed for Kansas. Courageously, Douglas risked his political future to oppose Lecompton on the grounds that an unacceptably small faction had written and ratified it, and that the whole document was not scheduled to be submitted to the people. His stand so impressed voters at home that for a time, there was actually talk of throwing Republican support behind his reelection effort. Lincoln blocked such an endorsement, and now Douglas was fighting desperately to hold together his Democratic coalition, while Lincoln was working tirelessly to ensure the survival of the new Republican party.³³

To dramatize their differences, Lincoln had launched his own campaign in June 1858 with the most radical statement of his career. "A House divided against itself cannot stand," he declared in Springfield. "I believe that this government cannot endure, permanently, half *slave* and half *free*." From that point forward, Lincoln was compelled to defend his dire prophecy—although he never varied from it—while Douglas, arguing that the nation had indeed long existed "half slave and half free," and could continue to do so indefinitely, was emboldened to paint him as a dangerous disunionist. Apparently, few voters tired of the opportunity to hear these issues argued publicly. Only

toward the very end of the schedule did debate attendance plummet. Otherwise, the Lincoln-Douglas meetings, however raucous, redundant, or diversionary, remained irresistible attractions for the people of Illinois at the time, gaining an even greater—some suggest an inflated—reputation for importance in the years since.³⁴

The considerable impact of the debates has been further obscured, and perhaps exaggerated, by the stubborn historical suspicion that Lincoln shrewdly used the debates mainly to position himself for the presidency two years later, intentionally sacrificing his chances of victory in the Senate race, but also dooming Douglas's White House hopes in the bargain (for more details, see the Freeport debate). However farfetched, the question lingers at the heart of the overarching, still-debated question of who really won the 1858 war of words, for it deceptively encourages modern readers to forgive Lincoln almost anything he said in 1858 on the mistaken assumption that his tactics were calculated to defeat the dangerous Douglas for the White House two years later. Such an end understandably seems to justify practically any means required to achieve it in the eyes of admirers who cannot help recalling Lincoln the martyr when they should be remembering Lincoln the debater.

On the issue of which debater truly prevailed, most scholars believe, with James M. McPherson, that Lincoln won “in the judgement of history—or at least of most historians.” Others, revisiting the debates in the light of twentieth-century mores, find Lincoln's views on race so much more palatable than Douglas's that they award him the decision by default.³⁵

The unexpurgated transcripts may make a more informed answer possible. In these texts, the candidates' debating styles seem more starkly at odds than even their political principles: Douglas's fevered, occasionally vitriolic; Lincoln's more casual, sometimes self-deprecating. Douglas emerges the clear victor in at least one category: sustained bombast, a sure crowd pleaser in the 1850s. He also seemed to sense more instinctively when to reach for a concluding argument (one report marveled that he had stopped at the precise moment his time expired), while Lincoln often let his time run down anticlimactically, or halted before he was required to. Douglas played skillfully, if repugnantly by modern standards, to audience racism. And while Lincoln scored more persuasively on moral issues, Douglas seemed the superior in raining blows on his opponent, and also in forging neatly arranged sentences; Lincoln's words simply do not as often scan as coherently. Occasionally

an inspired Lincoln did turn an unforgettable phrase that lingers in the mind's ear—as it undoubtedly did for audiences in 1858. And it would not be unfair to note that Douglas's words have similarly failed to endure. "He has no . . . splendid passages, no prophetic appeals, no playful turns," a journalist of the day admitted. "He deals only in argument." As a result, one suspects, his pronouncements are today neither recalled nor quoted: It is Lincoln who gave honor and meaning to the moral wrong of slavery; his views seem more modern, and so does his rhetorical technique. But that impression may rely more on hindsight than on nineteenth-century sensibilities. The unedited transcripts reveal that it was Douglas who spoke more fluently, not Lincoln; it is difficult to imagine his even pausing for breath between flourishes. Now, as then, choosing a winner is largely a matter of taste, but Douglas's impassioned style may well have suited the age and situation better than Lincoln's amusing informality and clever appeals to logic.³⁶

The newly excavated texts do serve to vivify Lincoln's early reputation as a witty stump orator. He is genuinely funny, and his humor contrasts sharply with his opponent's penchant for heavy-handed, belabored taunts. But whether Lincoln's droll ripostes proved formidable enough to withstand Douglas's relentless, searing, and usually more cogently phrased attacks is open to question. Listening impatiently to his candidate, one Lincoln supporter longed to "see blood follow every time he closes a sentence." He rarely got his wish. In unedited form, Lincoln's restrained style seems less a match for Douglas's withering frontal assaults than the edited record has long indicated. The judgment is not foolproof, since even the "pure" transcripts reprinted here were in their day subject to question and challenge. But the sustained pattern of attack and parry emerges indelibly here, and the unaltered evidence indicates that Douglas, not Lincoln, was the more agile extemporaneous public speaker. Writing many years later, Joseph F. Evans, an eyewitness to the Galesburg debate, recalled that "the revised editions of the printed debates" gave "an imperfect idea of their effect upon the audience, as a speech which required an hour and a half in delivery cannot be compressed into five or ten minutes' reading." Besides, Evans incisively noted, "the flavor, spirit and humor has vanished, and the skill of the orator to hold his audience does not appear on the printed page." The fresh perspective made possible by these long-ignored transcripts suggests that purely in terms of performance, not content, Stephen A. Douglas may well deserve what history has denied him: ultimate recog-

nition as the winner of the great debates of 1858. As for the Lincoln texts, here, beyond the sometimes disjointed phrasing, can often be found logic as riveting and moral suasion as soaring as that in his most carefully written speeches as president. And more than a hint of greatness yet to come.³⁷

That assessment, and the textual differences on which it is based, may not alter history. But it is possible that in their own time, they might have. Had the subsequently published book version of the Lincoln-Douglas debates featured unedited instead of polished texts, one might logically wonder whether Lincoln's stock among voters outside Illinois would still have risen in almost direct proportion to the volume's staggering 1860 sales. Many historians credit the broad distribution of that book with enhancing Lincoln's reputation; but would the boom have collapsed under the burden of his unedited debate transcripts? Of course, it is impossible to know for sure. But it is not unreasonable to conjecture that Lincoln would have enjoyed considerably less retrospective benefit from the debates had they been republished in the form in which they were originally heard.

In another sense, however, Lincoln nonetheless "won" the debates on three counts—first, merely by engaging his better-known rival (and emerging from the fray a national figure in his own right); second, by curtailing his party's brief flirtation with Douglas as a potential leader; and third, by emerging in edited print far better than he did in person. Whatever his inadequacies of gesture, voice, and syntax in the flesh, the *Tribune* reports and the book they inspired managed successfully to veil them. His choppy sentences were parsed, his roving syntax refined. The edited transcripts made it appear that he had more than held his own with one of the nation's most formidable debaters. Douglas's swaggering grandiloquence, on the other hand, so crackling in the unedited texts, seemed more stilted and purple in the formalized *Times* records. So it is not surprising that Lincoln's edited words went on to help establish him as an important voice for his party. With his speeches in print, local leaders, especially moderates, began talking of him as a favorite son candidate for president, his "House divided" sentiments apparently forgotten. Such approbation constituted a decided triumph for Lincoln, even if the *Tribune* deserved a share of the credit. "Public sentiment is everything," Lincoln had declared in the first debate. "He who moulds public sentiment is greater than he who makes statutes." Thanks at least as much to the edited record as to their stump perform-

ances, Douglas returned to the Senate to make statutes, while Lincoln won the battle to mold public sentiment.

Douglas won the debates if they are judged from the immediate political result alone: he was reelected to a third term in the Senate, and Lincoln was beaten. Yet even these results are too complex to be reported without providing some explanation. Not until 1913 did Americans obtain the right to elect their senators by direct popular vote. In 1858, state legislatures still chose U.S. senators, and that is where the Illinois contest between Lincoln and Douglas would ultimately be decided. On election day, no Illinois voters could cast ballots for either candidate directly; there was no so-called “beauty contest.” Based on the legislative results and the votes cast for State Treasurer, the best estimates give the Republicans 125,000 votes, to 121,000 for the Douglas Democrats and 5,000 for the Buchanan Democrats. (The vote was closer—124,556 to 122,413 to 5,173—in the race for Superintendent of Public Instruction.) Thus Lincoln men bested Douglas men, although Democrats amassed slightly more total votes than Republicans. In the popular count, it was practically a dead heat, with Lincoln men, perhaps significantly, faring slightly better in those counties that hosted the seven debates.* However, in the all-important contest for legislative seats, forty-six went to Democrats, and forty-one to Republicans.³⁸

Here there are further complications: thirteen more legislative seats were not up for reelection at all in 1858, eight of which were Democratic. That ensured a total of fifty-four votes for Douglas and forty-six for Lincoln in the final tally for the Senate. Some historians later claimed that the districts had been gerrymandered to guarantee a Democratic majority, or at least left unchanged despite an outmigration of pro-slavery southerners and the arrival of freedom-loving foreigners; others insist the district lines did not appreciably affect the result. The pro-Lincoln *State Journal* seemed surprised not by losing but “that we made so strong a fight.” One thing was certain: the fight did not prove strong enough to unseat the incumbent.

“Let the past as nothing be,” Lincoln wrote consolingly to a disappointed supporter a week after his defeat. “My view is that the fight must go on.” As for his own future, he pledged to stand “in no one’s way” for political office, merely to “fight in the ranks” in behalf of others. Glad as he was that he made the race, he claimed to believe its

*See table, p. 373.

outcome would render him politically extinct. Rather full of self-pity, he told a supporter: "I now sink out of view, and shall be forgotten."³⁹

But destiny had different plans for Abraham Lincoln. And after a few more days mired in melancholy, the defeated candidate summoned the foresight to declare that "the cause of civil liberty must not be surrendered at the end of *one*, or even one *hundred* defeats." He assured one sympathetic correspondent, "I am neither dead nor dying." And another who Lincoln knew was "feeling like h--l yet," he encouraged: "Quit that . . . we shall have some fun again." Now beginning to look to the future, he confidently predicted: "Another explosion will come."⁴⁰

The explosion came as prophesied. Lincoln triumphed at the Republican National Convention of 1860, and then Southern Democrats refused to join their Northern brethren in supporting Douglas to oppose him. In the ensuing four-way race for president—but one in which he would have prevailed even if the opposition had united around his old rival—Lincoln defeated Douglas and two others to win the presidency.⁴¹

No new debates were proposed for the 1860 campaign. Custom forbade it. Presidential nominees were still expected to conduct back-porch campaigns far from the hullabaloo of politics. Although Douglas broke with this tradition to stump the nation indefatigably, Lincoln stayed home, basking in the glow of the frenzied national campaign waged by the party in his behalf. Declaring it "imprudent," as he put it, "to write, or speak anything upon doctrinal points," he encouraged correspondents and visitors alike to reread his old orations, including the Lincoln-Douglas debates. "My published speeches contain nearly all I could willingly say," he declared in midcampaign. It was a wonderful example of subtle self-promotion. As Lincoln well knew, the debates were now available in a book version whose publication he had masterminded himself—a volume that helped elect him, but also helped compound and institutionalize the errors in the old edited transcriptions in the *Times* and *Tribune*.⁴²

V

Only a few weeks after losing the Senate race to Douglas, Lincoln was already admitting to "being desirous of preserving in some permanent form, the late joint discussions between Douglas and myself." Before

long, he had collected a complete run of transcripts from both the *Tribune* and the *Times* in a scrapbook. Displaying it to an old friend “with great satisfaction,” he explained that “he had got a book binder to paste the speeches, in consecutive order, in a blank book, very neatly.” He had done even more. “In my own speeches I have corrected only a few small typographical errors,” he wrote a prospective publisher (the surviving scrapbook indicates he did a bit more work than he was willing at first to admit). And he offered Douglas, in turn, “the right to correct typographical errors in his, if he desired,” alluding again to the old “mutilation” issue by adding: “I think the necessity in his case, would be less than mine. . . . I had no reporter of my own, but depended on a very excellent one sent by the Press & Tribune; but who never waited to show me his notes or manuscripts.”⁴³

Publishing these speeches directly from their respective party organs, Lincoln was now convinced, “would represent each of us, as reported by his own friends, and thus be mutual, and fair,” to the candidates if not to the readers. Editorial comments and crowd reactions would be “rigidly” excluded. By Christmas 1858, he was openly predicting that “there is some probability that my Scrap-book will be reprinted,” and the following March several publishers were indeed voicing interest. But one of the contenders soon dropped out of consideration, and while the remaining prospect maintained confidence that the proposed “experiment” would “sell readily and to good profit,” Lincoln derailed the project by imposing impractical conditions. He wanted the book to be taken directly from his scrapbook, but he did not want the scrapbook “out of my own control.” The publisher had no office in Springfield, but Lincoln suggested it be printed in his hometown “under my own supervision.” The title he had in mind was dreadful: *Illinois political canvass of 1858*. These early plans went nowhere.⁴⁴

Not until Lincoln toured neighboring Ohio in the election campaigns of 1859 was the project reinvigorated—and then quite by accident. Traveling that state to stump for Republican candidates, he left the scrapbook behind one day in a hotel room. To Lincoln’s immense relief, the landlord retrieved it and sent the prize back to him. But in casting about for its safe return, he intrigued the Ohio Republican chairman, who reintroduced the notion of seeing it published in “authentic and permanent form.” The contest for the White House was still a year away, but the state chairman astutely recognized that such a volume could become “essential . . . to the cause.” Before long, the

scrapbook was in the hands of the Columbus, Ohio, publishers, Follett, Foster & Co., and by the spring of 1860—perhaps even before the Republican National Convention met in Chicago in mid-May—the book was in print and on sale for fifty cents a copy and forty dollars per hundred, promoted as an essential tool for every “thorough and intelligent politician.”⁴⁵

But the “mutilation” issue refused to go away. Three months before its publication, word reached the Democrats that Lincoln had amended his remarks for the book. “You labor under a mistake, somewhat injurious to me,” Lincoln protested to the editor of the *Chicago Times*, “if you suppose I have *revised* the speeches, in any just sense of the word. I only made some small verbal corrections, mostly such as an intelligent reader would make for himself, not feeling justified to do more.”⁴⁶

Lincoln reiterated this defense in a letter reproduced as the opening statement of the book. “The copies I send you are reported and printed, by the respective friends of Senator Douglas and myself, at the time,” he wrote, “—that is, his by his friends, and mine by mine. It would be an unwarrantable liberty,” he added, “for us to change a word or a letter in his, and the changes I have made in mine, you perceive, are verbal only, and very few in number.” Lincoln may have protested a bit too much; a close examination of his well-preserved scrapbook suggests that he made more alterations than could reasonably be called either “verbal only” or “few in number.”⁴⁷

Notwithstanding the renewed controversy, the first edition of *Political Debates Between Hon. Abraham Lincoln and Hon. Stephen A. Douglas in the Celebrated Campaign of 1858, in Illinois* quickly became a best-seller. New printings were ordered, sales soon exceeded 30,000, and the publishers did not much exaggerate when they trumpeted: “Every Body Reads Them.” As for its impact on the voters of 1860, two influential Lincoln scholars who showed considerable sympathy for Douglas—Albert J. Beveridge and James G. Randall—would use the identical word in conceding that the book successfully “advertised” Lincoln in his race for the presidency.⁴⁸

Understandably, Stephen A. Douglas steadfastly maintained that the permanent record thus enshrined by Lincoln was “partial and unfair.” It did not record the debates as he, for one, remembered them; the whole project was an “injustice.” Even his own speeches suddenly seemed “ambiguous, incoherent, and unintelligible.” Anyone could see, by contrast, that Lincoln’s transcripts had been “revised, corrected, and

improved.” Indignantly Follett, Foster & Co. informed Douglas that in their view, “the speeches of Mr. Lincoln were never ‘revised, corrected, or improved’”—at least not “in the sense you use those words.” It was the old, familiar story. But by then it was too late to change it. Lincoln had never sought Douglas’s permission to publish the debates.⁴⁹

The publishing history of the Great Debates was in fact just beginning. By 1943, thirty-eight separate printings in book form had been recorded, and in 1958, the centennial year of the debates, historian Paul M. Angle put out yet another. *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln*, published between 1953 and 1955, included not only Lincoln’s debate speeches but also Douglas’s, as did Don Fehrenbacher’s 1988 anthology of Lincoln’s speeches and writings for the Library of America. All these reprintings were slavishly based on the scrapbook texts. The Little Giant’s protests notwithstanding, the Lincoln scrapbook had become a permanent part of the historical vocabulary of American politics. For Lincoln students, it earned a status that placed them nearly above reproach: not only had the volume served successfully to introduce Lincoln to voters outside Illinois but, as Carl Sandburg cannily noted, it was also the only book Abraham Lincoln ever “wrote,” “edited,” and published. Generations earlier, when a journalist visited Lincoln’s home shortly after his election to the presidency, he had spied, buried beneath “heaps and hills of newspaper” covering a table in the parlor, the old scrapbook that Lincoln had assembled after the debates. “Excellent reading they are, too,” added the reporter, perhaps unaware of the controversy its contents had inspired.⁵⁰

Already forgotten in the afterglow of the 1860 triumph, and long since relegated to the dustbin of history, was the fact that the debate book clearly presented something other than what “earwitnesses” had heard at Ottawa, Freeport, Quincy, and the other towns. Forgotten was the fact that partisan newspaper editors had irretrievably sanitized the texts to begin with, and that Lincoln himself had subsequently done some further damage to the historical record. “These debates are authentic,” an advertisement for the original edition blithely declared, explaining—or perhaps thus contradicting its claim—that the texts had been “reported by the friends of each.”⁵¹

And so the debates came down to us, not as they were argued originally but as the debaters and their supporters wanted them to be remembered. To know the real Lincoln-Douglas debates is to know the apotheosis of American political discourse as spectacle—with all weap-

ons loaded, no holds barred, and audiences hanging on every word, unless they were vociferously interrupting to offer comments of their own.

But how to reassemble the “lost” debates? In fact, it proved such a deceptively simple enterprise that it is astonishing that it has never been attempted previously. What historians long enjoyed access to, but seldom consulted, were the Democratic versions of what Republican Lincoln said and the Republican versions of what Democrat Douglas said, unaltered at the time and unedited since. Buried there, then as now, were the real Lincoln-Douglas debates.

VI

As for the saga of Lincoln and Douglas themselves, with the 1860 campaign behind them, there was but a brief coda left before the final curtain fell on their long rivalry. On March 4, 1861, Abraham Lincoln rose on the portico of the U.S. Capitol to deliver his inaugural speech. The lantern jaws were now hidden beneath luxuriant whiskers. Gone were the awkward gestures. The dusty clothes had been replaced by a handsome new suit. But there was still the inevitable stovepipe hat, and as the incoming president glanced behind him in search of somewhere to place it, he saw his longtime opponent leaning forward, hand outstretched gallantly. “Senator Douglas took it with a smile,” an onlooker reported, “and held it during the delivery of the Address.” That night, Mary Lincoln, the new First Lady, triumphantly entered the inaugural ball on the arm of the man who, legend holds, rivaled her husband not only in politics but also in romance, in the long-ago contest for her affections. As the first chapter of Abraham Lincoln’s presidency began, the final chapter of the Lincoln-Douglas competition concluded: the new chief executive returned to the White House to begin his work, while Douglas and Mary danced a sentimental quadrille.⁵²

Less than three months later, after undertaking yet another arduous speaking tour, this time to plead for the preservation of the union, Stephen A. Douglas died suddenly in Chicago of complications from rheumatism. He was only forty-eight. Back in Washington, Lincoln solemnly ordered the White House draped in black, and directed that government offices be shut down out of respect. On the day of the Little Giant’s funeral, Lincoln would see no visitors. He remained in isolation

behind the closed doors of his office, his thoughts surely turning back to the unforgettable summer and fall of 1858.⁵³

Lincoln's most famous speeches were before him. His triumphs at Gettysburg and the second inauguration were yet to come. But on that day, the voices of both of the century's greatest debaters were silent.

A WORD ON THE TEXTS



THE TEXTS PUBLISHED HERE for the first time since 1858 are the unedited transcripts recorded on the spot during each Lincoln-Douglas debate by the *opposition* press. Previous anthologies presented only the much improved, suspiciously seamless versions supposedly recorded simultaneously by each debater's friendly newspaper.

The resurrection of these unexpurgated transcripts will give modern readers long-overdue access to the debates as they were likely heard originally by the multitudes who witnessed the encounters back in 1858. In the process, the historical record will finally be liberated from reliance on texts that long ago were processed through the alembic of hired reporters, sympathetic publishers, and ultimately Lincoln himself, whose editorial hand guided the book-length version that, in turn, has provided the basis of all the published versions since.

But as this project progressed, it became clear that adjustments would have to be made. Short of presenting every word of every transcript of every debate side by side for comparison, each page annotated with

footnotes, a compromise system seemed better suited to the effort to exhume these old texts and present them to new readers.

In reading both the Republican and Democratic versions of the debates together, line by line, for example, it became obvious that all too often the various “phonographic experts” on both sides of the contest not only heard things differently but heard different things. Huge discrepancies occasionally leapt from the page and demanded clarification. So in presenting those sections which the two stenographers heard in dissimilar ways, we chose to present *both* versions—with the “friendly” alternative in the form of a bracketed insert. It is instructive that, charges to the contrary, there were only a few occasions to be found in the record of the “emasculatation” and “mutilation” reported at the time (readers are alerted to all of them and supplied alternative passages within the text).

Read side by side, the texts often prove startlingly different. One of the most frequently quoted of Lincoln’s aphorisms, for example—“he who moulds public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions,” as the pro-Republican press reported it from the first debate at Ottawa—was heard by opposition Democrats there in far less stylish, more truncated prose. It was simply “he who moulds public sentiment is greater than he who makes statutes.” Who can say for certain whether the pro-Douglas press fractured Lincoln’s wording as he spoke it, or whether pro-Lincoln reporters enhanced it later? But the latter explanation seems more believable.

In another revealing example, Lincoln’s well-known comments at the final debate at Alton were again heard quite differently by Republican-hired and Democrat-hired stenographers. As Lincoln’s man heard it, he said:

That is the real issue. That is the issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Judge Douglas and myself shall be silent. It is the eternal struggle between these two principles—right and wrong—throughout the world. They are the two principles that have stood face to face from the beginning of time; and will ever continue to struggle. The one is the common right of humanity and the other the divine right of kings. It is the same principle in whatever shape it develops itself. It is the same spirit that says, “You work and toil and earn bread, and I’ll eat it.” No matter in what shape it comes, whether from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people

of his own nation and live by the fruit of their labor, or from one race of men as an apology for enslaving another race, it is the same tyrannical principle.

It is a superbly crafted passage. But it is not what the rival press heard at Alton. As the Democratic reporter transcribed it, Lincoln said:

That is the real issue! An issue that will continue in this country when these poor tongues of Douglas and myself shall be silent. These are the two principles that are made the eternal struggle between right and wrong. They are the two principles that have stood face to face, one of them asserting the divine right of kings, the same principle that says you work, you toil, you earn bread, and I will eat it. It is the same old serpent, whether it come from the mouth of a king who seeks to bestride the people of his nation, and to live upon the fat of his neighbor, or whether it comes from one race of men as an apology for the enslaving of another race of men. It is the same old policy. . . .

Again, while the Democratic version lacks polish, it echoes with an impromptu-sounding immediacy lacking in the version published by Lincoln's allies. In the light of its long-delayed exposure, it can clearly be argued that the opposition version of all the transcripts deserve to be included on history's bookshelf, at the very least alongside the editions once approved by Lincoln, Douglas, and their supporters.

True, these newly unearthed rival transcripts may be no more perfectly dependable than the texts produced last century by the candidates' backers, but they may well be no more flawed, either. And it might logically be argued that the unfriendly supporters who transcribed these halting, imperfect sentences were surely no more likely to have altered them out of malice than were the friendly reporters and editors likely to improve theirs out of sympathy.

At the very least, many of the long-ignored turns of phrase revealed in these transcripts open new windows onto how the candidates really sounded. One particularly intriguing example occurs in the first debate when Lincoln refers to Henry Clay, or so we have long thought, as "my beau ideal of a statesman." The phrase has been cited so many times by biographers that it has entered the historical language. But the Democratic Chicago *Daily Times* heard Lincoln say "my beau ideal of

a *great man* [emphasis added],” not “statesman.” A minor point, but illustrative. How, logically, could the *Times* have flawlessly heard the less coherent French part of that phrase and somehow missed the English part? We cannot know for sure, but at the very least, the discrepancy enlightens us on how Lincoln pronounced his words. Even if he did say “statesman” that day, he evidently emphasized the second syllable, not the first. Clay was not a “statesman” but a “statesman,” which makes it easier to understand how one or the other stenographer misheard it. Surely readers deserve to read both versions when transcripts so differ, and on these pages, they will.

On other occasions, friendly editors softened harsh or colloquial phraseology to make it gentler on the eyes of its readers than it had been on the ears of its listeners. The *Press and Tribune*, for example, usually deleted the adjective whenever Douglas railed against “Black Republicans.” We chose here to let the blemished transcripts speak eloquently of the drama of the moment, if not the seamless prose of the orators. But again, alternative words and phrases are occasionally provided in brackets for the sake of comparison.

Then there were the moments when crowds erupted into such an avalanche of noise that stenographers confessed, right in their transcripts, their inability to follow whole sentences at a time. In such instances, alternative transcripts become vital tools to fill in blanks, even if the careful reader will wisely question how one reporter could have kept up his work uninterrupted while another confessed himself deafened by ambient sounds.

Where crowd noise is concerned, Lincoln deleted all mention of it from his “scrap-book,” an ill-advised decision fortunately overturned by subsequent editors who long ago rescued the cheers and catcalls from obscurity. But in its restored state, even this long-accepted record is problematical. The Republican stenographer always seemed to hear wild, enthusiastic outbursts for Lincoln when the Democratic reporter heard mere applause. And the Democratic stenographer predictably heard frenzied applause for Douglas when the Lincoln reporter remained suspiciously deaf to the approbation. As the *Daily Press and Tribune* complained editorially about the *Daily Times* stenographer in October 1858: “The fellow has even gone the length of suppressing the cheers and applause that so frequently greeted the remarks of Mr. Lincoln, while he has thickly interspersed Douglas’ harrangues with such ejaculations as ‘Great laughter,’ ‘Loud shouts,’ and ‘Tremendous

cheers,' when it is notorious that his remarks excited neither the one nor the other."

While it is next to impossible to imagine that the so-called phonographic reporters intentionally mangled opposition texts in the midst of taking rapid shorthand, it does not strain credulity to imagine their being either reluctant to concede audience approval during an opponent's speech or eager to insert evidence of applause that no one else heard when their own candidate was holding forth. Our editorial solution seemed obvious: crowd reactions as interpreted by *both* sides is included in bracketed inserts, the rival paper's first. (Brackets are used throughout, even though the *Times* reported crowd response in parentheses.) Readers will want to judge for themselves which reaction seems more probable, and will likely be amused by the more shameless discrepancies in the "record." (And as a further effort to make all inserts as concise as possible, the newspapers are throughout identified only as the *Tribune* and the *Times*.)

We also let stand a Democratic report from the Ottawa debate that portrayed Lincoln becoming so agitated during Douglas's remarks that he had to be restrained by his followers. The Republican press never reported the incident, and, although obliged later under his own rules for adaptation to use the *Times* clippings of Douglas's speeches in preparing his scrapbook, Lincoln nonetheless deleted all reference to it. But surely such reports deserve again to be mentioned, so they are restored to the text here, carefully annotated to remind readers that the newspapers did not always agree that such incidents occurred, and even when they did, seldom concurred about the details.

In editing these texts, punctuation errors have been cleansed, although several obvious errors have been retained, and identified through the use of "*sic*." Spelling mistakes—especially where proper names were given incorrectly—have been corrected as well. But the fragmented thoughts that came to a halt too soon to make perfect sense, and the long-winded sentences that lurched in one direction and then drifted off uncontrollably in another, have all been retained intact.

So, of course, have proper names. But while midcentury partisans were well acquainted with the political celebrities and political jargon of the day—Lincoln on one occasion elicited a knowing laugh by referring to Douglas, President Buchanan, and Chief Justice Taney respectively as Stephen, James, and Roger—today's readers can hardly be expected to know, for example, that a "Danite" was the period

epithet for a pro-Buchanan, anti-Douglas Democrat, or that southern Illinois was then colloquially known as “Egypt.” Nor have the more obscure elected officials of the day—even a onetime presidential candidate like Lewis Cass—retained sufficient name recognition to be readily recalled today. To help, where appropriate, editorial identifications have been sprinkled into the text, often enough, it is hoped, to provide context to the material, yet sparingly enough so that interpretation does not lapse into interruption.

Finally, readers will undoubtedly notice that Lincoln preferred to call his opponent *Judge*, not *Senator* Douglas, a reference to the Little Giant’s early days on the Illinois bench. The *Democratic Times* frequently referred to him the same way, so the title was not purely pejorative. But Lincoln could not help at one point during the debates reminding the audience that while Douglas deserved credit for bringing about the expansion of the state’s judicial system, he had somehow managed to emerge from his public-spirited effort a judge himself. The crowd roared with laughter, in true Lincoln-Douglas debate style.

THE FIRST JOINT DEBATE AT OTTAWA



Saturday, August 21, 1858

• THE SCENE •

THE FIRST LINCOLN-DOUGLAS DEBATE began late. No one was prepared for the crush of humanity that poured into the overwhelmingly Republican village of Ottawa on that searingly hot day, and no one made adequate provisions to control the crowd. The result bordered on chaos, and Lincoln later confided of the “vast concourse of people” that there were “more than could [get] near enough to hear.”

A canal town hugging the Fox and Illinois rivers midway between Chicago and Peoria in the northern part of the state, Ottawa could claim a permanent population of at most 7,000. But by debate day, between 10,000 and 20,000 more—estimates varied wildly—arrived in town from all directions to fill Ottawa to overflowing.

“Men, women, and children, old, and young,” as one reporter described the arrivals, flooded in on foot, on horseback, in ox-drawn

wagons, in fancy carriages, and aboard huge canal boats emblazoned with political banners. A fourteen-car special train hauled in spectators at half fare from Chicago, while eleven extra cars brought another crowd from Peru and La Salle. By early morning, the “great multitude” tramping through the unpaved streets left the town so “shrouded in dust” that the scene looked to one onlooker like “a vast smoke house.”

Then at one p.m., a full hour before the speeches were scheduled to begin, the throng began surging into the modest public square, quickly transforming it into “one mass of active life.” Most spectators rushed forward to secure good standing room—no chairs had been provided, and onlookers complained bitterly about the “wretched accommodations”—while others brazenly overran the unguarded speakers’ platform. As the audience howled with laughter, a few daredevils clambered onto its wooden awning, leaping about recklessly until they came crashing down through the roof and onto the laps of the few startled dignitaries who had finally fought their way to their seats.

Under a scorching summer sun, national flags, patriotic bunting, and motto-bedecked banners fluttered dazzlingly in the hot breeze. Peddlers hawked their goods at every corner, military units drilled solemnly, and musicians strained to make their martial tunes audible over the deafening crowd noise. At regular intervals the overall din was magnified by an explosion of artillery salutes that seemed to make the earth tremble. There were only a few trees in the square to shade the crowd, and tempers flared as hot as the weather: fueled by an abundant supply of liquid refreshment, Democrats fought with Republicans and Republicans argued with Democrats, while overwrought marshals pompously girdled in “partisan” sashes tried vainly to keep order. “Vanity Fair,” one journalist on the scene marveled, “never boiled with madder enthusiasm.”

Lincoln had arrived earlier in the day aboard a seventeen-car train bulging with supporters. Escorted into town in an evergreen-laden carriage, he was now resting in the mayor’s house. Douglas made his entrance in “an elegant carriage drawn by six white horses,” at the head of a procession of flag-waving supporters; he was ensconced at the local hotel. Now the candidates at last appeared on the scene, inching their way through blocked sidewalks

and toward the stage as the clamor around them intensified feverishly. Cheers echoed through the square as both men ascended the platform. A long half hour behind schedule, the Lincoln-Douglas debates finally got under way at two-thirty p.m.

Douglas was the opening speaker, and he occupied his hour introducing charges with which he would goad his opponent throughout the encounters to come. Lincoln was a dangerous radical. Lincoln had dishonorably opposed the Mexican War as a congressman a decade earlier. Lincoln was conspiring to “abolitionize” the old Whig and Democratic parties. Lincoln’s opposition to the Supreme Court’s Dred Scott decision, and its ban on citizenship for blacks, would lead to increased black immigration into Illinois. And Lincoln secretly favored a four-year-old set of radical resolutions adopted in Springfield, which called for repeal of the fugitive slave law, the emancipation of slaves in the nation’s capital, and other “Black Republican” goals. Douglas ended his searing attack by posing seven pointed questions to his rival, and he challenged Lincoln to respond to each.

Lincoln’s unusual stump style provided the audience with a distinct change of pace. Where Douglas had been angry and bombastic, Lincoln appeared relaxed and jovial. He donned spectacles to read from an old speech, jokingly explaining to the crowd that he was “no longer a young man.” He teased that the diminutive Douglas was a “great man” and he but a “small man.” And he drew roars of laughter in denying Douglas’s libel that he had operated a “grocery,” or saloon, as a young man in New Salem, by admitting only that he had once worked at “a little still house up at the head of the hollow.” Ignoring Douglas’s interrogatories, he switched rhetorical gears to dwell eloquently on the original promise of the Declaration of Independence, and reminded the crowd that his political hero, Henry Clay, a slaveholder, never denied its applicability to blacks as well as whites. Still, Lincoln, who seldom used the word “nigger” publicly, used it twice even in progressive Ottawa, whose congressman, Owen Lovejoy, was on race issues the most advanced officeholder in Illinois. Finally, Lincoln brushed aside Douglas’s attack on the radical Springfield resolutions by pointing out that he had not even

been in Springfield when they were adopted, and had never authorized support for them.

Douglas resumed his fierce attack during his half-hour rejoinder, reminding the crowd that Lincoln had again failed to specifically renounce the controversial Springfield resolutions, and chiding him for refusing to respond to his set of questions. When it was all over, supporters hoisted a surprised Lincoln on their shoulders—in triumph, boasted Republican newspapers later; Democratic journals insisted that the “funeral procession” was organized because Douglas’s onslaughts had left Lincoln’s “limbs cold” and “his respiratory organs . . . obstructed.” In the Louisville *Journal’s* opinion: “If they had foreseen how he would come out in the debate, they would have borne him off before it commenced.”

As the Democratic press saw it, Douglas had “electrified the crowd” at Ottawa, while Lincoln “dodged” and looked “embarrassed.” Republican journals, on the other hand, thought Lincoln appeared “high toned” and “powerful,” and Douglas “boorish” and “cowardly.” From faraway New York, Horace Greeley’s New York *Tribune* cheered that Lincoln had turned the race into nothing less than “a contest for the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of Satan—a contest for advance or retrograde in civilization.”

But Lincoln’s Republican friends at home privately worried that he had appeared far too defensive at Ottawa, and urged him to be more aggressive at the next debate. Law associate Henry Clay Whitney told the candidate bluntly that he had “dodged on the platform,” and pleaded with him not to handle Douglas so “tenderly” next time. “You have got to treat him severely,” he advised, “& the sooner you commence the better & easier.” A debate eyewitness from nearby Tiskilwa agreed that Lincoln had erred in not answering Douglas’s Ottawa interrogatories. “*I think that any answer,*” he wrote sternly, “*is better than none.*” Bluntest of all was the disappointed editor of the pro-Lincoln Chicago *Press and Tribune*. “For God’s sake,” pleaded Charles H. Ray, “tell him to ‘Charge Chester! Charge!’ ”

Lincoln himself shrugged off all the criticism, writing in mock relief to a friend: “Douglas and I, for the first time in this canvass,

crossed swords here yesterday, the fire flew some, and I am glad to know I am still alive.”

The transcripts follow: the pro-Republican Chicago *Daily Press and Tribune's* for Democrat Douglas's opening speech and rejoinder, the pro-Democratic Chicago *Daily Times's* for Republican Lincoln's rebuttal.



MR. DOUGLAS' OPENING SPEECH

At half past two, Mr. Douglas took the front of the platform, amid the cheers of the Hibernians, who had fought their way to the front [such references to the overwhelmingly Democratic Irish, typical in the Republican press of the day, were designed to alarm voters who feared immigration and disliked foreigners—*ed.*], and said:

MR. DOUGLAS said—Ladies and gentlemen. I appear before you to-day for the purpose of discussing the leading political topics which now agitate the public mind. This vast concourse of people shows the deep feeling which pervades the masses in regard to this question. By an arrangement previously made, we have to-day a joint discussion between Mr. Lincoln and myself as the representatives of the two great political parties in this State and the Union.

Prior to 1854, this country was divided into two great political parties, known as the Whig and Democratic parties—both national and patriotic in their principles—both advocating principles which were universal in their application. An old line Whig could proclaim his principles in Louisiana and in Massachusetts alike. Whig principles were not limited by the Ohio river, nor by the Potomac, nor by the line of the free and the slave States, but applied and were proclaimed wherever the Constitution ruled, or the American flag waved over American soil. [Hear him, and three cheers. —*Times*] So it was and so it is with the principles of the great Democratic party, which from the days of Jefferson until this period, had proven itself to be the historical party of this nation. While the Whig and the Democratic parties differed in regard to a Bank, and in regard to a Tariff, and in regard to Distribution, and in regard to the Specie Circular [President Jackson's 1836 order that the government accept only specie in public land sales—an effort to arrest speculative fever—*ed.*], and in regard to the Sub-Treasury, they agreed on the great question that now agitates the Union, known as the Slavery question. I say that Whigs and Democrats agreed on this Slavery question, while they differed on those matters of expediency to which I have referred.

The Whig party and the Democratic party jointly adopted the compromise measures of 1850 as the basis of the solution of the slavery question in all of its forms. Clay was the great leader, with Webster on his right and [Lewis] Cass [senator from Michigan—*ed.*] on his left,

sustained by the patriots in the Whig and Democratic ranks, in devising, and adopting, and enacting the compromise measures of 1850 [an attempted final solution to the sectional crisis, fathered by Henry Clay and championed by Douglas, which its advocates believed would defuse the volatile slavery issue. But more than two thirds of Congress voted against at least some elements of the package, and it managed only to postpone the conflict to come—*ed.*]. Again, in 1851, in Illinois, the Whig party and the Democratic party united in resolutions endorsing and approving the compromise measures of 1850 as the proper adjustment of this question. In 1852, when the Whig party assembled at Baltimore, for the purpose of nominating its candidate for the Presidency, the first thing it did was to adopt the compromise measures of 1850, in substance and in principle, as the satisfactory adjustment of that question.

[Here a number of persons began to applaud, when one strong-voiced applauder, with more enthusiasm than the rest, prolonged the strain until it ended in a melancholy howl, which produced great laughter. —*Tribune*; Here the speaker was interrupted by loud and long continued applause. —*Times*]

Mr. Douglas continued. My friends, silence is more acceptable to me in the discussion of this question than applause. I desire to address myself to your judgment—to your understanding—to your consciences—and not to your passions. I was saying, when the Democratic Convention assembled at Baltimore, in 1852, for the purpose of nominating a candidate to the Presidency, they also adopted the Compromise measures of 1850 as the basis of Democratic action. Thus you see that up to 1853-4, the Whig party and the Democratic party both stood on the same platform in regard to the Slavery question which now agitates the country. That platform was the right of the people of each State and of each Territory to decide their local and domestic institutions for themselves, subject only to the Federal Constitution.

At the session of 1853-4, I introduced into the Senate of the United States a bill to organize the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska on that principle, which had been adopted in the Compromise measures of 1850, approved by the Whig party and the Democratic party and the Democratic party in Illinois in 1831, and endorsed by the Whig party and the Democratic party in the national Conventions of 1852. In order that there might be no misunderstanding in regard to the principle involved in the Kansas and Nebraska bill, I put forth the true intent and

meaning of the act in these words: "It being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any State or Territory, not to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Federal Constitution."

Thus you see that up to 1854, when the Kansas and Nebraska bill [whose "popular sovereignty" provisions had aroused Lincoln to re-enter politics—*ed.*] was brought into Congress for the purpose of carrying out the principles which, up to that time, both parties had endorsed and approved, there had been no division in this country in regard to that principle, except the opposition of the Abolitionists. In the Illinois Legislature, in the House of Representatives, upon the resolution asserting that principle, every Whig and every Democrat in the House voted for that principle. Only four men voted against it, and those four men were Old Line Abolitionists. [Cheers. —*Times*] In 1854, Mr. Abraham Lincoln and Mr. [Lyman] Trumbull [U.S. senator and 1858 Lincoln supporter—*ed.*] entered into an arrangement one with the other, and each with their respective friends, to dissolve the old Whig party on the one hand, and to dissolve the old Democratic party on the other hand, and convert the members of both parties into an Abolitionist party under the name [and disguise —*Times*] of the Republican party. [Applauses and hisses. —*Tribune*; Laughter and cheers, hurrah for Douglas. —*Times*] The terms of that arrangement between Mr. Lincoln and Mr. Trumbull have been published to the world by Mr. Lincoln's special friend, Mr. James H. Matheny [the best man at Lincoln's 1842 wedding—*ed.*], which was that Mr. Lincoln was to have Gen. [James] Shields' [longtime Lincoln foe and Democratic U.S. senator unseated by Trumbull—*ed.*] place—then about to become vacant in the United States Senate—and Mr. Trumbull was to have my place. [Great laughter. —*Times*] Mr. Lincoln went to work industriously to abolitionize the old Whig party all over the State, pretending that he was as good a Whig as he ever was. [Laughter. —*Times*] Trumbull went to work in his part of the State, down in Egypt [southern Illinois—*ed.*], preaching Abolitionism in a milder and a lighter form, and of not quite as dark a color, but yet trying to abolitionize the Democratic party and bring the old Democrats handcuffed, bound hand and foot into the Abolition camp. ["Good," "hurrah for Douglas" and cheers. —*Times*]

In pursuance of that arrangement, the parties met at Springfield in October, 1854, and proclaimed their new platform. Mr. Lincoln was to

bring into the Abolition camp the old line Whigs, and transfer them over to [Joshua R.] Giddings [abolitionist congressman from Ohio—*ed.*] and [Salmon P.] Chase [antislavery former senator from, then governor of Ohio, later Lincoln's treasury secretary—*ed.*], Fred[erick] Douglass [the country's best-known black leader—*ed.*], [Owen] Lovejoy [Republican congressman and ardent Lincoln booster; he sat on the speakers' platform during this debate—*ed.*] and [John F.] Farnsworth [congressman from Chicago—*ed.*], who were then ready to receive and christen them into Abolitionists. [Laughter and Cheers. —*Times*] They laid down on that occasion a platform for this new Republican party, which was to be constructed out of the old Whig party and the old Democratic party, by abolitionizing both and transferring them to abolitionism. I have the resolutions of that Convention, which was the first Mass State Convention ever held in Illinois by the Republican party. I now hold them in my hand, and will read a part of the resolutions and cause the others to be printed. Here is one of the resolutions and the most material one of this Abolition platform, under the new name of Republicanism:

2. *Resolved*, That the times imperatively demand the reorganization of parties, and repudiating all previous party attachments, names and predilections, we unite ourselves together in defense of the liberty and constitution of the country, and will hereafter co-operate as the Republican party, pledged to the accomplishment of the following purposes: to bring the administration of the government back to the control of first principles; to restore Nebraska and Kansas to the position of free territories; that, as the constitution of the United States vests in the States, and not in Congress, the power to legislate for the extradition of fugitives from labor, to repeal and entirely abrogate the fugitive slave law; to restrict slavery to those States in which it exists; to prohibit the admission of any more slave States into the Union; to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia; to exclude slavery from all the territories over which the general government has exclusive jurisdiction; and to resist the acquirements of any more territories unless the practice of slavery therein forever shall have been prohibited.

[The resolutions, as they were read, were cheered throughout. —*Times*] [Douglas read only Resolution No. 2, but submitted a total of three resolutions for publication two days later in the *Times*, a clear

indication of their editors' collaboration in the effort to enhance the senator's debate texts in print—*ed.*] Now, gentlemen, you have cheered—you Republicans have cheered every one of these propositions [renewed cheers. —*Tribune*; “Good and cheers.” —*Times*], and yet I venture to say that you cannot get Mr. Lincoln, your candidate, to come out and say that he is now for each one of them. [Laughter and applause. “Hit him again.” —*Times*] That these propositions do one and all constitute the platform of the Black Republican party this day, I have no doubt [“good.” —*Times*], and when you were not aware for what purpose I was reading these resolutions, you cheered them as good Black Republican doctrine [cheers. —*Tribune*; “That's it,” &c. —*Times*], and yet my object in reading them is to put the question to Abraham Lincoln this day, whether he now stands, and will stand by each article of that creed, and carry them all out. [“Good,” “Hit him again.” —*Times*] I desire to know whether Mr. Lincoln to-day stands pledged as he did in 1854, in favor of the unconditional repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law. I desire him to answer whether he stands pledged to-day as he did in '54, against the admission of any more slave States, even if the people want them. I want to know if he stands pledged to vote against the admission of a new State into the Union with such a Constitution as the people of that State may see fit to make. [“That's it,” “put it at him.” —*Times*] I desire to know whether he stands pledged to-day to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia. I desire to know whether he stands pledged to abolish and prohibit the slave trade between the different States. [“He does.” —*Times*] I desire to know whether he stands pledged to prohibit slavery in all the Territories of the United States, North as well as South of the Missouri Compromise line [36° 30' latitude—*ed.*]. [“Kansas too.” —*Times*] I desire him to answer whether he is opposed to the acquisition of any more territory, unless slavery is first prohibited therein. I want his answer. Your affirmative cheers in favor of this Abolition platform are not satisfactory; but I want Abraham Lincoln to answer these questions, in order that when I trot him down into Lower Egypt [colloquialism for the southern areas of Illinois, whose residents were more pro-slavery than elsewhere in the state—*ed.*], I may compel him to repeat the same. [Enthusiastic applause. —*Times*]

My principles are the same everywhere. [Cheers, and “hark.” —*Times*] I can proclaim them alike in the north and in the south, in the east and in the west. My principles will apply wherever the Constitution

prevails, and the American flag waves over American territory. ["Good," and applause. —*Times*] I desire to know whether Mr. Lincoln's principles will bear to be transplanted from Ottawa to Jonesboro. I put these questions to him to-day and ask an answer. I have a right to an answer upon these ["That's so," "he can't dodge you," &c. —*Times*] for I quote them from the platform of the Republican party—the platform made by himself and others at the time the Republican party was first formed, and the bargain was made to dissolve and kill off and destroy the old Whig and Democratic parties, and transfer each of their members, bound hand and foot, into the Abolition party, under the directions of Giddings and Chase. [In the official transcript, Douglas or his supporters substituted the name of "Fred" Douglass here, probably hoping it would prove more inflammatory—*ed.*] [Cheers. —*Times*]

In the remarks which I have made upon this platform, and the positions of Mr. Lincoln upon it, I mean nothing personal, disrespectful or unkind to that gentleman. I have known him for nearly twenty-five years. We had many points of sympathy when I first got acquainted with him. We were both comparatively boys—both struggling with poverty in a strange land for our support. I an humble school teacher in the town of Winchester, and he a flourishing grocery [in frontier parlance, a saloon—*ed.*] keeper in the town of Salem. [Laughter. —*Tribune*; Applause and laughter. —*Times*] He was more successful in his occupation than I, and thus became more fortunate in this world's goods. Mr. Lincoln is one of those peculiar men that has performed with admirable skill in every occupation that he ever attempted. I made as good a school teacher as I could, and when a cabinet maker I made the best bedsteads and tables, but my old bones said I succeeded better in bureaus and secretaries than in anything else. [Laughter. —*Tribune*; Cheers. —*Times*] But I believe that Mr. Lincoln was more successful in his business than I, for his business soon carried him directly into the Legislature. There I met him in a little time, and I had a sympathy for him, because of the up hill struggle that we had in life. [Cheers and laughter. —*Tribune*] He was then as good at telling an anecdote as now. ["No doubt." —*Times*] He could beat any of the boys at wrestling—could outrun them at a foot race—beat them at pitching quoits and tossing a copper, and could win more liquor than all the boys put together [Laughter and cheers. —*Tribune*; Uproarious laughter. —*Times*]; and the dignity and impartiality with which he presided at a

horse-race or a fist-fight were the praise of everybody that was present and participated. [Renewed laughter. —*Tribune* and *Times*] Hence I had sympathy for him, because he was struggling with misfortune and so was I.

Mr. Lincoln served with me, or I with him, in the Legislature of 1836, when we parted. He subsided or submerged for some years, and I lost sight of him. In 1846, when [David] Wilmot [Pennsylvania senator—*ed.*] raised the Wilmot Proviso tornado [a failed but portentous 1846 attempt to bar slavery from territory taken in the Mexican War—*ed.*], Mr. Lincoln again turned up as a member of Congress from Sangamon District. I, being in the Senate of the United States, was called to welcome him, then without friend and companion. He then distinguished himself by his opposition to the Mexican war, taking the side of the common enemy, in time of war, against his own country. [Cheers and groans. —*Tribune*; “that’s true.” —*Times*] When he returned home from that Congress, he found that the indignation of the people followed him everywhere, until he again retired to private life, and was submerged until he was forgotten again by his friends. [“And will be again.” —*Times*] He came up again in 1854, just in time to make the Abolition–Black Republican platform, in company with Lovejoy, Giddings, Chase and Fred. Douglass, for the Republican party to stand upon. [Laughter, “Hit him again,” &c. —*Times*] Trumbull, too, was one of our own contemporaries. He was one born and raised in old Connecticut. Bred a Federalist, he removed to Georgia, and there turned Nullifier, when Nullification was popular. But, as soon as he he [*sic*] disposed of his clocks and wound up his business, he emigrated to Illinois. [laughter. —*Times*] When he got here, having turned politician and lawyer, he made his appearance in 1840–41 as a member of the Legislature, and became noted as the author of a scheme to repudiate a large portion of the State debt of Illinois, and thus bring infamy and disgrace upon the fair escutcheon of our glorious State. The odium attached to that measure consigned him to oblivion for a time. I walked into the House of Representatives and replied to his repudiation speeches until we carried resolutions over his head denouncing repudiation, and asserting the moral and legal obligation of Illinois to pay every dollar of debt she owed—every bond bearing her signature. [“Good,” and cheers. —*Times*] Trumbull’s malignity towards me arises out of the fact that I defeated his infamous scheme to repudiate the State debt and State bonds of Illinois.

Now these two men, having formed this combination to abolitionize the old Whig party and abolitionize the old Democratic party, and put themselves in the Senate in pursuance of the bargain with each other, are now carrying out that arrangement. Matheny states that the bargain was made, and I understand it from others, and I suppose Lincoln will not deny it. [Applause and laughter. —*Times*] The bargain was, that Lincoln was to have the place of Shields in the Senate, and Trumbull was to wait for mine. [Laughter and cheers. —*Times*] The story goes that Trumbull cheated Lincoln at that time. Trumbull having control of four or five Abolition Democrats, who were holding over in the Senate [state legislators then elected U.S. senators—*ed.*], would not let them vote for Lincoln, and forced the Abolition Whigs to go over to Trumbull, thus cheating Lincoln out of his part of the bargain. [Lincoln indeed turned his support to Trumbull to block Democratic Joel Matesson from election to the Senate, but he denied that a deal had earlier been struck to guarantee both Trumbull and himself Senate seats—*ed.*] Now Lincoln desires that he shall have the place then designed for Trumbull, as Trumbull cheated him and got his place; and Trumbull is now stumping the State, traducing me, for the purpose of securing that position to Mr. Lincoln in order to quiet him. [“Lincoln can never get it,” &c. —*Times*] That accounts for the fact that the Republican Convention were compelled to instruct for Lincoln and nobody else when they nominated him. They had to pass a resolution that Lincoln was the first choice of the Republican party. Archy Williams was nowhere—[Orville] Browning was nobody—John Wentworth was not worthy of notice—[Norman] Judd was not to be considered [all fellow Republicans—*ed.*]. They had nobody else in the Republican party except Lincoln, for the reason that Lincoln demanded that they should now carry out the arrangement. [“Hit him again.” —*Times*]

Hence, having formed this new party for the joint benefit of deserters from Whiggery and deserters from Democracy—having laid down the abolition platform which I have read—Lincoln now takes the stand and proclaims his abolition doctrine. Let me read a part of it. In his speech to the convention which nominated him for the Senate, in Springfield, he says—“In my opinion the slavery agitation will not cease until a crisis shall have been reached and passed. ‘A house divided against itself cannot stand.’ I believe this government cannot endure permanently half slave and half free. I do not expect the Union to be dissolved. I do not expect the house to fall, but I do expect that it will cease to be

divided. It will become all one thing or all the other. Either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward until it shall become alike lawful in all the States, old as well as new, North as well as South.” [Tremendous cheers. Cries of “Good! good!” —*Tribune*; “Good, good,” and cheers. —*Times*] Yes, I have no doubt it is, and I am delighted to hear you [“you Black Republicans,” according to the *Times—ed.*] say good. [Good! good! Laughter. —*Tribune*] I have no doubt that that doctrine expresses your sentiments, and yet I will prove to you, if you will listen to me, that doctrine is revolutionary, and destructive of the existence of our government. [“Hurrah for Douglas,” “good,” and cheers. —*Times*] Mr. Lincoln here says that our government cannot endure permanently in the same condition in which it was made by its framers. It was made divided into free States and slave States. Mr. Lincoln says it has existed for near eighty years thus divided; but he tells you that it cannot endure permanently on the same principles and in the same conditions relatively in which your fathers made it. [“Neither can it.” —*Times*] Why can’t it endure divided into free and slave States? Washington, as the President of the Convention, Franklin, and Madison, and Hamilton, and Jay, and the patriots of that day, made this government divided into free States and slave States, leaving each State perfectly free to do as it pleased on that subject of slavery. [“Right, right.” —*Times*] Why can’t it exist upon the same principles upon which our fathers made it. [“It can.” —*Times*] Our fathers knew when they made this government that in a country as wide and broad as this—with such a variety of climate, of interests, of productions, as this—that the people necessarily required different local laws and local institutions in certain localities from those in other localities. They knew that the laws and regulations that would suit the granite hills of New Hampshire would be unsuited to the rice plantations of South Carolina. [“right, right,” —*Times*] Hence, they provided that each State should retain its own Legislature and its own sovereignty, with the full and complete power to do as it pleased within its own limits in all that was local and not national. [Applause. —*Times*] One of the reserved rights of the States was that of regulating the relation between master and slave, or the slavery question. At that time—that is when the Constitution was made—there were thirteen States in the Union, twelve of which were slave States, and one was a free State. Suppose this doctrine

of uniformity—all to be one or all to be the other—now preached by Mr. Lincoln had prevailed then, what would have been the result? Of course the twelve slaveholding States would have over-ruled the one free State, and slavery would have been fastened by a constitutional provision on every inch of the American continent, instead of being left as our fathers wisely left it, for each State to decide for itself. [“Good, good,” and three cheers for Douglas. —*Times*] I therefore say that uniformity in the local laws and local legislations of the different States was neither possible nor desirable. If any uniformity had been adopted, it must inevitably have been the uniformity of slavery everywhere, or the uniformity of negro citizenship and negro equality everywhere.

We are told by Lincoln that he is utterly opposed to the Dred Scott decision [divisive 1857 Supreme Court ruling that held that blacks could not be American citizens, and Congress could not bar slave “properties” from the territories—*ed.*], and will not submit to it, for the reason, as he says, that it deprives the negro of the rights and privileges of citizens. That is the first and main reason, he says, for his warfare upon the Supreme Court of the United States, that it deprives the negro of the rights and privileges of citizenship. [Laughter and applause. —*Times*] Now, I ask you, are you in favor of conferring upon the negro the rights and privileges of citizenship? [“No, no.” —*Times*] Do you desire to strike out of our State Constitution that clause which keeps slaves and free negroes out of the State, and allow the free negro to flow in [“never,” —*Times*] and cover our prairies with his settlements. Do you desire to turn this beautiful State into a free negro colony [“no, no,” —*Times*], in order that when Missouri shall abolish slavery, she can send us these emancipated slaves to become citizens and voters on an equality with you. [“Never,” “no,” —*Times*] If you desire negro citizenship—if you desire them to come into the State and stay with white men—if you desire to let them vote on an equality with yourselves—if you desire to make them eligible to office—to have them serve on juries and judge of your rights—then go with Mr. Lincoln and the Black Republicans in favor of negro citizenship. [“Never, never,” —*Times*] For one, I am opposed to negro citizenship in any form. [Cheers. —*Times*] I believe that this government was made on the white basis. [“Good,” —*Times*] I believe it was made by white men for the benefit of white men and their posterity forever, and I am in favor of confining the citizenship to white men—men of European birth and European descent, instead of conferring it upon Negroes and Indians, and other

inferior races. ["Good for you." "Douglas forever." —*Times*] But Mr. Lincoln, following the lead of the Abolition orators that came here and lectured in the basements of your churches and school houses, reads the Declaration of Independence that all men are created free and equal, and then says: "How can you deprive the negro of that equality which God and the Declaration of Independence awards to him?[" He and they maintain that negro equality is guaranteed by the laws of God, and re-asserted in the Declaration of Independence. If they think so, they ought thus to say and thus to vote.

I do not question Mr. Lincoln's conscientious belief that the negro was made his equal, and hence is his brother. ["Laughter," —*Times*] But, for my own part, I do not regard the negro as my equal, and I positively deny that he is my brother, or any kin to me whatever. ["Never." "Hit him again," and cheers. —*Times*] But he has learned Lovejoy's catechism, and can repeat it as well as Farnsworth, and could receive baptism from Father Giddings or Fred. Douglass on Abolitionism. [Laughter. —*Times*] He holds that the negro was [*Times* added: born his equal and yours, and that he was] endowed with equality by the Almighty, and hence that no human power alone can deprive him of these rights which the Almighty has guaranteed to him. I do not believe the Almighty ever intended the negro to be the equal of the white man. ["Never, never." —*Times*] If he did he has been a long time demonstrating the fact. [Laughter. —*Tribune*; Cheers. —*Times*] For six thousand years the negro has been a race upon the earth, and during that whole six thousand years—in all latitudes and climates wherever the negro has been—he has been inferior to whatever race adjoined him. The fact is he belongs to an inferior race and must occupy an inferior position. ["Good," "that's so," &c. —*Times*] I do not hold that merely because the negro belongs to an inferior race, therefore he ought to be a slave. By no means can such a conclusion be drawn. On the contrary, I do hold that humanity and Christianity both require that the negro should have and enjoy every right, every privilege, and every immunity, consistent with the safety of the society in which he lives. [That's so. —*Times*] On that point I presume there can be no diversity of opinion. You and I are bound to extend to every inferior dependent being every right, every privilege, and every facility and immunity, consistent with the public good.

Then the question arises, what rights and privileges are consistent with the public good? That is a question which each State and each

Territory must decide for itself. Illinois has decided that question for herself. We, in Illinois, have provided that the negro shall not be a slave. We have also provided that he shall not be a citizen, but we protect him in his civil rights—in his life—in his person—in his property—while we deprive him of any political right whatsoever, and refuse to treat him on an equality with the white man. [“Good.” —*Times*] That policy of Illinois is satisfactory to me. If it were to the Republicans, then there would be no question upon the subject. But the Republicans say that the negro ought to be made a citizen, and when he becomes a citizen, he becomes your equal in all rights and privileges of citizenship. [“He never shall.” —*Times*] They assert that the Dred Scott decision is wicked and monstrous because it denies that a negro is or can be a citizen under the Constitution. Now I hold that Illinois had a right to abolish and prohibit slavery as she did, but I hold that Kentucky has the same right to continue and protect slavery that Illinois has to abolish it. I hold that New York had as much right to abolish slavery as Virginia has to continue it. I hold that each and every State of this Union is a sovereign power, with the right to do as it pleases on this question of slavery, and all domestic institutions [the essence of Douglas’s doctrine of popular sovereignty, which he championed with the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and which Lincoln steadfastly opposed; it held that the people of each territory, not Congress, should be empowered to welcome or bar slavery as they saw fit—*ed.*]. But slavery is not the only domestic relation that comes upon this controversy. The question is far more important to you. What shall be done for the free negro? We have settled the slavery question as far as we are concerned; we have prohibited it in Illinois forever. In doing so, I think we have done wisely, and there is no man in the State who would be more strenuous in his opposition to the introduction of slavery than I would [cheers —*Times*]. But when we have settled it for ourselves, we have exhausted all our power over the subject, we have done our whole duty; we have no right to go further, but we must leave each and every other State to decide for itself beyond our limits. Then the question arises, which shall be our policy in regard to free negroes? We have said they shall not vote. The State of Maine says free negroes may vote. Maine is a sovereign State, and has the power to regulate the qualifications within her limits. While I would not be in favor of conferring the rights of citizenship upon free negroes in our own State, yet I shall not quarrel with the State of Maine because it differs from me in opinion. Let Maine take care of her own

negroes and let Illinois alone, and we will let the State of Maine alone. So with the State of New York. She allows the free negro to vote and hold office, provided he owns \$250 worth of property, but not otherwise. While I would make no distinction between a negro who held property and one who did not, yet if the sovereign State of New York adjudges to make that distinction, it is her business and not mine. I will not quarrel with her if she does this. She may do as she pleases upon this question, and mind her own business, and we will do the same.

Now, my friends, if we will only act rigidly and conscientiously upon the great principle of popular sovereignty which guarantees to each State and each Territory the right to do as it pleases, instead of Congress interfering, we will be at peace one with another. Why should Illinois be at war with Missouri, or Kentucky with Ohio, or Virginia with New York, merely because their institutions differ? Our fathers intended that these institutions should differ. Our fathers knew that the South and the North, so far apart—differing in climate and production, had different interests requiring different institutions. This doctrine of uniformity of Mr. Lincoln's making all of them conform alike, is a new doctrine, never dreamed of by Washington or Madison, or the framers of the Constitution. Mr. Lincoln and the Republican party set themselves up as wiser than those who made the government. This government has flourished for seventy years upon the principle of popular sovereignty, recognizing the right of each State to do as it pleases. Under that principle, we have grown up from three or four millions to about thirty millions of people. Under that principle, we have crossed the Alleghany Mountains, and filled up the whole Northwest, turning the prairie into a garden, building up cities, and towns, and churches, and schools, and spreading civilization and Christianity where before there was nothing but savage barbarism. Under that principle, we have become from a feeble nation the most powerful nation on the face of the earth. If we still only obey that principle we can go forward increasing in territory, increasing in power, in strength and glory, until the Republic of America shall be the North star that shall guide the friends of freedom throughout the civilized world. ["Long may you live," and great applause. —*Times*] Then, my friends, why can we not adhere to that great principle of self-government upon which our institutions were originally made? ["We can." —*Times*] I believe that this new doctrine preached by Mr. Lincoln and this Abolition party would dissolve the Union. They try to array all the Northern States in one body against

the South, inviting a sectional war of the free States against the slave States—Northern States against Southern States, to last until the one or the other shall be driven to the wall.

I am told that my time is out. You will now hear Mr. Lincoln for an hour and a half, and then myself for half an hour in reply. [Three times three cheers were here given for Douglas. —*Times*]

MR. LINCOLN'S REPLY

[When Mr. Lincoln rose, there were evident signs of a desire to applaud. —*Times*; Mr. Lincoln then came forward and was greeted with loud and protracted cheers from fully two-thirds of the audience. This was admitted by the Douglas men on the platform. It was some minutes before he could make himself heard, even by those on the stand. At last he said— —*Tribune*]

My fellow citizens: (Don't take up my time)—when a man hears himself misrepresented just a little, why, it rather provokes him, at least so I find it with me, but when he finds the misrepresentation very gross, why it sometimes amuses him. [Laughter. —*Tribune*] The first thing that I find to mention on this occasion that Judge Douglas has mentioned, is the fact that he alleges that Judge Trumbull made an arrangement in 1854, by which I was to have the place of Shields in the United States senate, and Judge Trumbull was to have Judge Douglas' place.— Well, all I have to say is, that Judge Douglas cannot prove that because it is not true, nor nothing like it. [Cheers. —*Tribune*] I have no doubt he is conscientious [Laughter. —*Times* and *Tribune*] in saying so. Again—I am not going to waste much time on this affair—as to these resolutions that he took such a time to read as the platform that the republican party passed in 1854, I never had anything to do with them, and I think Trumbull never had [Renewed laughter. —*Tribune*], and Judge Douglas cannot show that we ever did have, either one of us. Now, I believe this is true about these resolutions.—There was a call for a convention to form a Republican party in Springfield. I think my friend Lovejoy, who is with me on the stand, had a hand in it. I think that it is so, and I think that if he will remember correctly, that he tried to get me into it; and I would not do it. [Cheers and laughter. —*Tribune*] Well, I believe it is also true, as I went from Springfield when the convention was in session. I did not remain, but went to Tazewell court. They had placed my name without any of my authority on a committee and they wrote to me to attend the convention, and I refused to do it. That is the plain truth of the whole thing.

Now all these stories about Trumbull bargaining to sell out the old democratic party, and Lincoln the old whig party—well I have the means of knowing about it, and Judge Douglas may not have the means of knowing about it, and there is nothing of it in the world. [Cheers and

laughter. —*Tribune*] Now, I have no doubt Judge Douglas is conscientious about it. [voices, “that is it—hit him again,” &c. —*Times*; Laughter. —*Tribune*] I know that after this, when Mr. Lovejoy got into the legislature, he complained of me, that I had told him that they were old whigs in our party, and that old whigs were good enough for us to vote for, and that some of them had voted against him. A man cannot prove a negative at all but he has the right to ask the man who asserts a state of case to prove it. I cannot introduce testimony to show the negative of this thing, but I have the right to claim that the man who says that he knows these things, that he should say how he knows them. It is not exactly satisfactory to me, because he may be conscientious in it. [Cheers and laughter. —*Tribune*]

Now, I hate to waste my time on some things [*Tribune* substituted “such things”—*ed.*]. But on the abolition tilt, that the Judge thinks that I was engaged in, I hope you will permit me to read a part of a speech that I made at Peoria, which will show altogether a different state of case. [A voice—put on your specs. —*Times* and *Tribune*] Yes, sir, I am obliged to do that. I am no longer a young man. [A voice—too young to get into the senate. —*Times*; Laughter. —*Tribune*]

[Mr. L. here read, for seven minutes, from a speech delivered by him at Peoria, October, 1854—the intention of which was to show that he did not entertain the idea of the negro, &c. —*Times*; (*The Tribune* reprinted the excerpt in full, as follows—*ed.*)]

This is the *repeal* of the Missouri Compromise. The foregoing history may not be precisely accurate in every particular; but I am sure it is sufficiently so, for all the uses I shall attempt to make of it, and in it, we have before us, the chief materials enabling us to correctly judge whether the repeal of the Missouri Compromise is right or wrong.

I think, and shall try to show, that it is wrong; wrong in its direct effect, letting slavery into Kansas and Nebraska—and wrong in its prospective principle, allowing it to spread to every other part of the wide world, where men can be found inclined to take it.

This *declared* indifference, but as I must think, covert real zeal for the spread of slavery, I can not but hate. I hate it because of the monstrous injustice of slavery itself. I hate it because it deprives our republican example of its just influence in the world—enables the enemies of free institutions, with plausibility, to taunt us as hypo-

critics—causes the real friends of freedom to doubt our sincerity, and especially because it forces so many good men amongst ourselves into an open war with the very fundamental principles of civil liberty—criticising the Declaration of Independence, and insisting that there is no right principle of action but *self-interest*.

Before proceeding, let me say I think I have no prejudice against the Southern people. They are just what we would be in their situation. If slavery did not now exist amongst them, they would not introduce it. If it did now exist amongst us, we should not instantly give it up. This I believe of the masses north and south. Doubtless there are individuals, on both sides, who would not hold slaves under any circumstances; and others who would gladly introduce slavery anew, if it were out of existence. We know that some southern men do free their slaves, go north, and become tip-top abolitionists; while some northern ones go south, and become most cruel slave-masters.

When southern people tell us they are no more responsible for the origin of slavery, than we; I acknowledge the fact. When it is said that the institution exists, and that it is very difficult to get rid of it, in any satisfactory way, I can understand and appreciate the saying. I surely will not blame them for not doing what I should not know how to do myself. If all earthly power were given me, I should not know what to do, as to the existing institution. My first impulse would be to free all the slaves, and send them to Liberia,—to their own native land. But a moment's reflection would convince me, that whatever of high hope (as I think there is) there may be in this, in the long run, its sudden execution is impossible. If they were all landed there in a day, they would all perish in the next ten days; and there are not surplus shipping and surplus money enough in the world to carry them there in many times ten days. What then? Free them all, and keep them among us as underlings? Is it quite certain that this betters their condition? I think I would not hold one in slavery, at any rate; yet the point is not clear enough to me to denounce people upon. What next? Free them, and make them politically and socially, our equals? My own feelings will not admit of this; and if mine would, we well know that those of the great mass of white people will not. Whether this feeling accords with justice and sound judgment, is not the sole question, if indeed, it is any part of it. A universal feeling, whether well or ill-founded, can not be safely disregarded. We can not, then, make them equals. It does seem to me that systems of gradual emancipation

might be adopted; but for their tardiness in this, I will not undertake to judge our brethren of the south.

When they remind us of their constitutional rights, I acknowledge them, not grudgingly, but fully, and fairly; and I would give them any legislation for the reclaiming of their fugitives, which should not, in its stringency, be more likely to carry a free man into slavery, than our ordinary criminal laws are to hang an innocent one.

But all this; to my judgment, furnishes no more excuse for permitting slavery to go into our own free territory, than it would for reviving the African slave trade by law. The law which forbids the bringing of slaves *from* Africa; and that which has so long forbid the taking them *to* Nebraska, can hardly be distinguished on any moral principle; and the repeal of the former can find quite as plausible excuses as that of the latter.

Now, after all the Judge has said of me, the Judge heard me make that speech, he heard me make it four years ago—I may be right or wrong—but I have never departed from that. [Voices—“right,” “wrong” &c. —*Times*] I follow on to say that my own feelings will not permit of this.

That I told the Judge four years ago. I think the judge has some reason to know that I was not then engaged in an abolition tilt but I don't mean that the judge shall catechize me. I will have one for one, when the time comes for original ones, but here is one slips out, and I have answered it before mine comes; he has got it without my getting one. [*Tribune* added: “He has got my answer on the Fugitive Slave Law.”—*ed.*]

“Again, when they remind me,” I am reading still [here the *Times* inserted the last lines of the Peoria extract—*ed.*], “that they are no more responsible for the existence of slavery than we are, I acknowledge their truth; but all this, to my judgment, furnishes no more excuse for permitting slavery to go into our own free territory, than it would for reviving the African slave trade by law. The law which forbids the bringing of slaves from Africa, and that which has so long forbid the taking of slaves to Nebraska, can hardly be distinguished [*sic*] principle. I deny that they can be distinguished at all.—The repeal of the former could find as many excuses as that of the latter.”

These are the viewpoints upon the whole subject, upon the institution of slavery, and any system of argumentation that says anything, or that

argues me into the idea of perfect social and political equality with the negro, is a species of fantastic arrangement of words by which a man can prove a chestnut horse to be a horse chestnut. [The *Tribune* version of this joke, and the one repeated since, but possibly altered by Lincoln and his editors at the time, was “by which a man can prove a horse chestnut to be a chestnut horse”—*ed.*] [Applause. —*Times*; Laughter. —*Tribune*]

I will say here while I am upon this subject, I have no purpose directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the states where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so. I have no disposition to introduce political and social equality between the white and the black races. There is a physical difference between the two, which in my judgment will probably forever forbid their living together on terms of respect, social and political equality, and inasmuch as it becomes a necessity that there must be a superiority somewhere, I, as well as Judge Douglas, am in favor of the race to which I belong having the superior position; but I hold that because of all this there is no reason at all furnished why the negro after all is not entitled to all that the declaration of independence holds out, which is, “life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness” [applause; —*Times*; Loud cheers. —*Tribune*][,] and I hold that he is as much entitled to that as the white man. I agree that the negro may not be my equal and Judge Douglas’ equal in many respects—certainly not in color, and in intellectual development, perhaps—but in the right to [*Tribune* added “eat”—*ed.*] the bread [*Tribune* added, “without leave of anybody else,”—*ed.*] which his own hand earns; he is my own equal and Judge Douglas’ equal, and the equal of every living man.

[Voice, “bully for you,” “all right,” etc. —*Times*; Great applause. —*Tribune*]

Now, one or two other of these little matters, and I pass on. The judge is woefully at fault again about his early friend being a grocery keeper. [Laughter. —*Tribune*] I don’t know that it would be a great sin if I had, but he is mistaken. Lincoln never kept a grocery in his life. [Laughter. —*Tribune*] It is true that Lincoln did work, the latter part of one winter at a little still house up at the head of the hollow. [Roars of laughter. —*Tribune*]

So I think the judge is equally at fault when he charges me when I was in congress, with having opposed the Mexican war. The judge does not make his charge very distinctly—he rather insinuates it, but I will

tell you how that was. Whenever the democratic party tried to get me to vote that the war had been properly begun, it could not do it, but when they asked me to give money, or supplies, or land warrants to the soldiers, I gave the same votes as Judge Douglas did, for he was in the other branch. [Loud applause. — *Tribune*] You may think as you please as to whether I was consistent, but when he insinuates that I withheld my vote; or did anything to perplex [the *Tribune* substituted “hinder”—*ed.*] the soldiers, he is mistaken altogether, as an investigation of the record will prove.

I will state, as I have not used so much of my time as I thought I had, perhaps I will dwell a little longer upon some two or three of these little topics that the judge has spoken of. He has read from my speech at Springfield in which I say that “a house divided against itself cannot stand.”—Does the judge say it can? [Laughter. — *Tribune*] I don’t know—the judge don’t seem to be attending to me just now—but I would like to know if it is his opinion that it can. If so, that raises a question of veracity, and it is not a question of veracity, between the judge and I, but the judge has a question of veracity with a somewhat higher character than myself. [Laughter and applause. — *Tribune*] It is not a question between him and me.

Now, I ask your attention to that matter for the purpose of saying somewhat seriously, and not merely for the purpose of fun; and I know the judge will agree with me. We may misapply it as a true maxim, and he may argue that I misapply it. I have then the right, on the contrary, to show that I do not. Now, when he undertakes to show that because I say that, I think this Union cannot exist permanently so divided, when I say this so far as the question of slavery is concerned, that I am in favor of bringing about a dead uniformity, he, as I think, argues very erroneously, as I will try to show.

Now the great variety in the local institutions of the states spring from the difference of their climates, and they are really the bonds of union between the states, each furnishing the means to supply the wants of the other, they become no apples of discord. [The *Tribune* here added, perhaps later: “They do not make a house divided against itself, but they make a house united. If they produce in one section of the country what is called for by the wants of another section, and this other section can supply the wants of the first, they are not matters of discord, but bonds of union, true bonds of union”—*ed.*] But can this question of slavery be assimilated to these things? I leave it to you to say whether

throughout the history of our government, from time to time, has not this institution of slavery always failed to be a bond of union, but on the contrary, proved to be an apple of discord, and an element of discord, in the house [Cries of “yes, yes,” and applause. —*Tribune*]; and I ask you to consider whether so long as the structure of men’s minds shall continue as God has seen fit to make them, this question of slavery will not continue to be an element of discord in the houses. If that institution is standing in that position, and it will continue to be an element of division [Cries of “Yes, yes.” —*Tribune*], if so, then I have the right to say that in regard to that thing, this Union is a house divided against itself, and when the judge reminds me, as I have often said to him, that the institution of slavery has existed for some eighty years in some of the states, while it did not exist in some other[s], I agree to the fact, and I explain and account for the fact by the attitude in which our fathers originally placed it, legislating to put off its source, putting the seal of legislation against its spread, and leaving the public mind at rest in the belief that it was in the course of ultimate extinction. [Applause. —*Times*; Cries of “Yes, yes.” —*Tribune*]

But I think lately that he and those who have acted with him have placed that institution on a new basis, one that looks to the perpetuation and extension of it. [Loud cheers. —*Tribune*] While it is placed upon this basis I have said that I believe we shall not have peace until “either the opponents of slavery will arrest the further spread of it, and place it where the public mind shall rest in the belief that it is in [the] course of ultimate extinction; or its advocates will push it forward, till it shall become alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new, north as well as south.” [From the House Divided speech—*ed.*]

Now, let me repeat. If we would arrest the spread of it—if we would place it where Washington, Jefferson and Madison placed it, it would be in the course of ultimate extinction, and the public mind would be at rest in the belief of its ultimate extinction. The crisis would be passed; and though the institution might be alive long, and might linger for a hundred years, yet it would be going out in God’s own time, in the way that would be best for both the white and the black races. [Applause. —*Times*; Great cheering. —*Tribune*]

A VOICE—You repudiate popular sovereignty, then?

Well, we will talk about popular sovereignty, as you insist upon it. [Laughter. —*Tribune*] What is popular sovereignty? [A voice, “a hum-bug.” —*Times* and *Tribune*] Is it the right of the people to have slavery,

or not, if they see fit, in the territories? Is it, or not?

I will state that my understanding is that popular sovereignty, applied to the question of slavery, and as now applied, does allow the people of a territory, to have slavery if they want it, and it don't allow them to not have it if they don't want it. [Applause and laughter. —*Times* and *Tribune*] I don't mean to say that if this vast concourse of people were in the territory of the United States that any one of them are obliged to have slaves if they did not want them, but I do say that if any one among them wants them, there is no one or number of them can keep him from it. [A voice, "Well, you are a fool." —*Times*] Well, that may be, and I guess there are two of us that are that way. [Laughter.]

When I made my speech at Springfield,—that speech of which the judge complains, or from which he quotes,—why, I really was not thinking of this thing that he ascribes to me at all. I had no thought in the world that I was doing anything to bring about the absolute equality of the white and black races. It never occurred to me that I was doing anything to reduce to a dead uniformity all the local institutions of the states; but I must say in justice to the judge, that if I am really doing something that leads to these bad results, it is just as bad to the country, whether I wished it or not; but I ask you, can it be true that placing this institution of slavery upon the original basis upon which our fathers placed it, that it can have any tendency to compel the people of Vermont to raise sugar corn because they can raise it in Louisiana, or to compel the people of Grand Prairie to cut pine logs off the prairie where none grow, because they cut them in Maine[?] [Laughter. —*Tribune*]

The people [*Tribune* had "the Judge"—*ed.*] does not generally claim that he is administering, by his Kansas-Nebraska doctrine, the slavery question upon the basis of the original constitution. I think he says, in one of his speeches, that he saw evidences of a policy to allow slavery to be in existence south of a certain line. Now, I am fighting him upon this original principle. I am fighting in favor of the old principle of Washington, Jefferson and Madison. [Laughter and applause. —*Tribune*]

Now, my friends, I want to attend a little to one or two other things. In that Springfield speech, my main object was to show, so far as my humble self was capable of doing—to arouse this country to the belief—that there was a tendency, if not a conspiracy, to make slavery perpetual and universal in this Union; and having made that speech principally for that object, after bringing forward the evidence that I thought

tended to prove that proposition, among other things I went on with this little bit of comment, which I will read to you. I said this:

“We cannot absolutely know that all these exact adaptations are the result of preconcert. But when we see a lot of framed timbers, different portions of which we know have been gotten out at different times and places, by different workmen—Stephen, Franklin, Roger, and James for instance [Douglas, Pierce, Taney, and Buchanan—all collaborators, Lincoln charged, in the conspiracy to nationalize slavery—*ed.*]—and when we see these timbers joined together, and see they exactly make the frame of a house or mill, all the beams [“tenons” in Lincoln transcript—*ed.*] and mortices exactly fitting, and all the lengthy [“lengths and”—*Tribune*] proportions of the different pieces exactly adapted to their respective places, and not a piece too many or too few—not omitting even [the] scaffolding—or, if a single piece be lacking, we can see the place in the frame exactly fitted and prepared to getting such piece in—in such case we find it impossible to not believe that Stephen and Franklin and Roger and James all understood one another from the beginning, and all worked upon a common plan or draft before the first lick was struck.” [Great cheers. —*Tribune*]

When my friend Judge Douglas came to Chicago, on the 9th of July, this speech having been delivered on the 16th of June, he made a speech [the *Tribune* substituted “harrangue”—*ed.*] there in which he took hold of this speech of mine, and showing that he had carefully read it, and while he paid [no attention] to this at all, he complimented me as being a most kind, amiable and intelligent gentleman. Notwithstanding I had said this, he goes on and draws out from that speech this tendency of mine to set the states at war, and to set the negroes [the *Tribune* had “niggers”—*ed.*] and white people to marrying with one another. [Laughter. —*Tribune*] Well the next evening after that, as the judge had complimented me as highly as he had, I must confess to my weakness—I was a little taken with it [Laughter. —*Tribune*], it coming from a great man, and one that the world acknowledges as a great man—I do not speak that in mockery—I was a little taken with it; I was not much accustomed to flattery. I was very much like the hoosier with the gingerbread—he said that he loved it better and got less of it than any other man. [Roars of laughter. —*Tribune*] Well, as the judge had flattered me as much as he had, I made up my mind that he did not mean to misrepresent me at all, so I went to making a speech, to show him and to convince him that I did not mean all these dreadful things.

As an illustration, I had incidentally said that I claimed “no right, and there ought to be no inclination in the people of the free states, to enter into the slave states and interfere with the question of slavery at all.” The judge thereupon, at Bloomington, where I heard him speak, said that I had said that I would not go into the slave states, but that I said I will go on to the bank of the Ohio and shoot over among them. [Laughter. —*Tribune*] Well, he runs on step by step in the race, until he gets on at Clinton to using this form of speech, and says that “unless he shall be successful in firing his batteries, the Union cannot stand.” Now, I did not think that was exactly the way to treat a kind, amiable, and intelligent gentleman. [Roars of laughter. —*Tribune*] I thought that if I had asked the judge to show when or where it was that I had said that if I did not succeed in firing into the slave states the Union would be dissolved that he could not do it. I understood well enough, he would say, I did not mean to quote from you. I only meant that this was the result of the argument; but I would have the right to ask it, and I now do ask him. Did you not put it in the form that an ordinary listener or reader of a newspaper would take it as a quotation from me? [Laughter. —*Tribune*]

But I turned in, and, in a speech at Springfield, I thought I might as well attend to my own business a little. I recalled, as well as I could, his attention to this charge of conspiracy to nationalize slavery. I called to his attention, that he had acknowledged that he had twice read the speech, and as he had made public no plea or answer, I took a default upon him and insisted that I had a right to renew the charge of that conspiracy.

Well, ten days afterwards, I met the judge at Clinton—that is to say, I was on the ground, not in a discussion, but I was on the ground to hear him make a speech. He then comes in with his plea to the charge, for the first time, and his plea when it is put in, I believe, as well as I can remember, it amounts to this: that he never had any talk with Chief Justice Taney or the president of the United States, about the Dred Scott decision, before it was made, and that I, Lincoln, ought to know that the man who makes a charge, not knowing it to be true, falsifies as much as he who knows it to be false, and lastly, that he would pronounce the whole thing a falsehood; but he made no personal application of the charge of falsehood—not out of regard for the kind, amiable and intelligent gentleman, but for his own personal self-respect. [Roars of laughter. —*Tribune*] I have understood since—but [turning to Judge

Douglas—*Tribune*] I won't stick the judge to it, if he does not want to have it—he has come up to saying the thing out.

He nods to me—that is so. [Laughter. —*Tribune*] Now it may astonish you that I can keep as good humored as I can, when the judge acknowledges that he is making a question of veracity with me. I know that the judge is a great man [while I am only a small man—*Tribune*], but I feel in my soul that I have got him. [Tremendous cheering. —*Tribune*]

I demur to that plea—I waive all objections because it was not filed until after default was taken, and I demur to it upon the merits. What if Judge Douglas never did talk to Chief Justice Taney or the president until the decision was made? Does it follow that he could not have as perfect an understanding with them without it as with it? But I am disposed to take his denial rather as an answer in chancery, that he neither had knowledge or belief of the existence of any such conspiracy. Now, I ask you, after that is denied, if he had done so, have I not the right yet to prove it on him, and is there not more than the evidence of the two witnesses to prove it, and if it does not prove the existence of conspiracy, does it disturb the facts at all that would run to show that he had been used by the conspirators instead of being the leader of them? [Vociferous cheering. —*Tribune*]

Now, in regard to his reminding me of the moral rule, that persons who tell what they do not know to be true falsify as much as they who knowingly tell a falsehood. I remember that rule, and it should be borne in mind that what I have read to you says that I do not know such a conspiracy to be true; but I say that I believe it, and if he says that I don't believe it, then he says that which he don't know, and falls within his own rule.

As to his statement that if it were not for his self-respect he would call the whole thing a falsehood, or, in plain words, call somebody a liar about it. I want to ask your attention to a little discussion about that branch of the case. I had arrayed the evidence which brought my mind to the conclusion. Now, if in stating that evidence by mistake any part of it was erroneous, it needed but the judge to have pointed it out to me, because I would have taken it back. If I should have brought forward any thing as a matter of fact that is not a matter of fact, and he should point it out to me, it will not ruffle me to take it back, and if he will not point it out to me, or show that I have reasoned falsely, it is not for him to call the kind, amiable, and intelligent gentleman a liar. [The *Tribune*

had, “is it not rather for him to show . . . than to call the ‘kind, amiable, intelligent gentleman,’ a liar?”] [Cheers and laughter. —*Tribune*] If I have reasoned to a false conclusion, it is but the vocation of a very able debater to show the fact in a very amiable way, without cross or ugly language. It is easily done. But I want to ask the attention of the audience to a portion of the Nebraska bill which the judge himself has quoted:

“It being the true intent and meaning of this act not to legislate slavery into any territory or state, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to regulate their own domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the federal constitution.”

And thereupon the judge instantly began arguing in favor of popular sovereignty, the right of the people to have slaves if they wanted them, and to exclude slavery if they wanted to do so. But, said a senator from Ohio, by the name of Chase, we more than suspect you do not mean that the people shall have the right to exclude slavery if they want to, and if you do not mean it [the *Tribune* says, “if you do mean it”—*ed.*], accept an amendment expressly authorizing the people to exclude slavery. I believe I have the amendment before me:

“The people of the territory, through their appropriate representations, may, if they see fit, prohibit the existence of slavery therein.”

I now state it as a fact to be taken back if there is any mistake in it, that Judge Douglas and those acting with him voted that amendment down. [Tremendous applause. —*Tribune*] I now think that those men who voted that down had a real reason for doing so. They know what that reason was. It looks to us since we have seen the Dred Scott decision come, holding that under the constitution the people cannot exclude slavery, it looks to outsiders, poor, simple, amiable, intelligent gentlemen [great laughter, —*Tribune*], it looks as if it was the place left to put that Dred Scott decision in [laughter and cheers —*Tribune*], and now I say again that if there was another and a different reason other than the conclusion that I have drawn, it will avail the judge much more to point out to these people what that good reason was for voting that amendment down, rather than swelling himself and asserting that he may be provoked to call somebody a liar. [Tremendous applause. —*Tribune*]

Again, there is in that same quotation from the Nebraska bill another point. It being not the intention to legislate slavery into any territory or state, I have always been puzzled to know what business the word state

had there. Judge Douglas knows, he put it there, he knows what he put it there for. We outsiders could not see what it was put there for. The law that they were passing was not about states, it was making no provision for states. What was it put there for? After seeing the Dred Scott decision, if another shall come holding that they cannot exclude it from the states, we shall find it was the odd half of something, the other half of which was to come in due time. Now I say again if there is any different reason for putting it there, the judge can, in a good humored way, without calling me or anybody else a liar, tell what that good reason was. [Renewed cheers. —*Tribune*]

When the judge spoke at Clinton he was very near making a charge of falsehood against me. He used, as I find it printed in the newspapers afterwards, and as I remember it, the language was very nearly if not quite the same, the following words: "I did not answer the charge before, for the reason that I did not suppose there was an American whose heart was so corrupt as for a moment to believe that such a charge could be true." [A voice, "We knew it to be true, didn't we?" —*Times*] And then the judge after I have dropped a part of the quotation, added that he "had too much respect for Mr. Lincoln to suppose he was serious in making the charge." I confess that I thought that was a curious view, that I had made what he now says, was a serious charge, in fun. [Laughter. —*Tribune*]

Now says the judge, I did not for a moment believe that there was a man in America whose heart was so corrupt as to make such a charge. I hope the judge will not blame me as being the only man in America who has a heart base enough to make such a charge. I hope that he will excuse me if I find out one other who has made a charge something as I have. If I should find one, that one happened to be Judge Douglas himself [who made one—*Tribune*], why then I hope he will consider this question of the deep corruption of hearts which he has thought fit to ascribe to me. [Great applause and laughter. —*Tribune*] In Judge Douglas' speech of the 22d March, 1858, I read—

"In this connection there is another topic to which I desire to allude. I seldom refer to the course of newspapers, or notice the articles which they publish in regard to myself; but the course of the Washington *Union* has been so extraordinary, for the last two or three months, that I think it well enough to make some allusion to it. It has read me out of the democratic party every other day, at least, for two

or three months, and keeps reading me out, [laughter,] and, as if it had not succeeded, still continues to read me out, using such terms as 'traitor,' 'renegade,' 'deserter,' and other kind and polite epithets of that nature. Sir, I have no vindication to make of my democracy against the *Washington Union*, or any other newspapers. I am willing to allow my history and action for the last twenty years to speak for themselves as to my political principles, and my fidelity to political obligations. The *Washington Union* has a personal grievance. When its editor was nominated for public printer, I declined to vote for him, and stated that at some time I might give my reasons for doing so. Since I declined to give that vote, this scurrilous abuse, these vindictive and constant attacks have been repeated almost daily on me. There is one article in an issue of that paper which I ask my friend from Michigan to read."

This is a speech made on the 22d March, 1858, and this part begins on page 21. I tell you the place so that you may read the article which [Charles] Stuart [senator from Michigan—*ed.*] read for Judge Douglas. When he got through reading, Judge Douglas sums up, as I think correctly, the views advanced by the *Union*:

Mr. President, you here find several distinct propositions advanced boldly by the *Washington Union*, editorially and apparently authoritatively[,] and every man who questions any of them is denounced as an abolitionist, a free soiler, a fanatic. The propositions are, first, that the primary object of all government at its original institution is the protection of persons and property; second, that the constitution of the United States declares that the citizens of each state shall be entitled to all the privileges and immunities of citizens in the several states; and that, therefore, thirdly all state [the *Tribune* added, "laws, whether organic or otherwise, which prohibit the citizens of one State from settling in another with their slave"—*ed.*] property, and especially declaring it forfeited, are direct violations of the original intentions of the government and constitution of the United States; and, fourth, that the emancipation of the slaves of the northern states was a gross outrage on the rights of property, inasmuch as it was involuntarily done on the part of the owner.

Remember that this article was published in the *Union* on the 17th of November, and on the 18th appeared the first article giving the

adhesion of the *Union* to the Lecompton constitution [disputed pro-slavery constitution ratified in Kansas in 1857 after Free Soilers boycotted Constitutional Convention, subsequently approved by Congress but rejected by Kansas voters in 1858; Douglas had split with President Buchanan, a fellow Democrat, to oppose it—*ed.*]. It was in these words:

“KANSAS AND HER CONSTITUTION.—The vexed question is settled. The problem is solved. The dread point of danger is passed. All serious trouble to Kansas affairs is over and gone”—and, a column, nearly, of the same sort. Then, when you come to look into the Lecompton constitution, you find the same doctrine incorporated in it which was put forth editorially in the *Union*. [The *Tribune* version included several Lecompton constitution clauses—*ed.*]

“It will be seen by these clauses in the Lecompton constitution, that they are identical in spirit with this authoritative article in the Washington *Union* of the day previous to its indorsement of this constitution, and every man is branded as a free-soiler and abolitionist, who does not subscribe to them.”

It ends at last with this:

“When I saw that article in the *Union* of the 17th November, followed by the glorification of the Lecompton constitution on the 18th of November, and this clause in the constitution asserting the doctrine that no state has a right to prohibit slavery within its limits, I saw that there was a fatal blow being struck at the sovereignty of the states of this Union, a death blow to state rights, subversive of the democratic platform and of the principles upon which the democratic party have ever stood, and upon which I wish it will ever stand.”

Now, what was this charge that the judge thinks I must have so very corrupt a heart to have made? It was a purpose on the part of certain high functionaries to make it impossible for any state to prohibit the citizens of other states coming into that state and settling down with their slave property[;] in other words, it was a conspiracy, as I had charged, as my belief, to make the constitution [the *Tribune* has “institution”—*ed.*] national. And now I want to ask your attention to what this is that the judge has done. I know he made that part of his speech ostensibly as a reason why he had refused to vote for a certain man as

public printer, but when we get the charge, it is the same charge that I made against him; and now who does he make that charge against? Does he make it against the newspaper editor merely? That it is identical in spirit with the Lecompton constitution, so that the framers of the constitution are brought in with the editor of that newspaper, in that “fatal blow being struck.” He does not call it a conspiracy. In his language it is a “fatal blow being struck,” and he may, if the word is any better, change the word that I used into a “fatal blow being struck.” [Cheers and laughter. —*Tribune*] But we see that he charges that that fatal blow is not being struck by the editor of the *Union*, but by the framers of the Lecompton constitution; but not only so, the article was “authoritative,” so by whose authority was it made? Who does he mean? It is by the authority of the president and government—the administration. Is there any question but that this is so? Where is the editor of the *Union*, the framers of the Lecompton constitution, the president, the government, and all the supporters of the Lecompton constitution, in congress and out of it—all are involved in this charge of Judge Douglas of the fatal blow being struck to nationalize slavery. I commend to him the consideration of the question as to how corrupt the heart of a man must be to make such a charge. [Laughter and applause. —*Times*; Vociferous cheering. —*Tribune*]

A VOICE—Are you in favor of the Lecompton constitution?

MR. LINCOLN—And now, my friends, I have but one other branch of this subject that in the limited time we have to speak, I shall touch upon. I have but one other branch to which I will call your attention; then I shall come to a close. It is probable that I shall not actually occupy all the time that shall belong to me, although I would have liked to have talked twice as long. I ask the attention of this community here assembled and elsewhere to the course of [*sic*] Judge Douglas is pursuing every day as upon this question of making slavery national. Not going back to the record and going to the speeches that he made here and elsewhere, I ask attention to that.

In the first place, what is necessary to make the institution of slavery national? There is no danger of the people of Kentucky shouldering their muskets to bring slavery upon us—there is no danger of our going there to make war upon them. [A voice—“You dare not do it.” —*Times*] What is necessary to make slavery national? It is simply the next Dred Scott decision—it is simply for the supreme court to decide that no state under the constitution can exclude slavery, just as they and

the territorial legislatures cannot exclude it from the limits of the territory. This being true, this being the way as I think that slavery is to be made national, if it is ever to be made so at all, let us consider what Judge Douglas is doing. First let us say that public sentiment is everything [the *Tribune* transcript, with a phrase perhaps written later, added: "With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it, nothing can succeed"—*ed.*]—he who moulds public sentiment is greater [the *Tribune* has "goes deeper"—*ed.*] than he who makes [the *Tribune* has "enacts"] statutes [or pronounces decisions—*Tribune*]. This borne in mine [*sic*; should be "mind"—*ed.*], and also the additional fact that my friend Judge Douglas is a man of vast influence, and, that it is enough for many men to profess to believe a thing, so that when others find out that he professes it or believes, they take it as a part of their creed. This is the attitude of the party which is, perhaps, as he claims a majority party, who will agree with his sentiments in a political campaign. This being borne in mind, what does the judge do in regard to the Dred Scott decision? He sticks to a decision that forbids the people of a territory to exclude slavery, not because he says it is right in itself, but because it has been decided by a court—because it has come from that court, he, as a good citizen, and you, as good citizens are bound to take it in your political action [as *law*—*Tribune*]—not that he judges of it on its merits, but because the decision of the court is to him a "thus saith the Lord." [Applause. —*Tribune*] He places it upon the ground, and you will bear in mind that this commits him to the next one just as much as this. He does not commit himself to it because of its merits, but because it is a "thus saith the Lord." The next [decision —*Tribune*] will be "thus saith the Lord" [Laughter. —*Times*] as much as this, and there is nothing that can turn the judge away from his devotion to this decision. It is nothing that I point out to him that this great prototype, Jackson did not believe in this way upon the great binding force of supreme court decisions. It is not that I point out to him that Jefferson did not believe in it. I had said that I had heard the judge himself often approve of the opinion of Jackson, but I say he ought to remember better than I, and I will make no question with him; but it still seems that I have heard him do it twenty times. [Applause and laughter. —*Tribune*] I will tell him though that he claims to stand on the Cincinnati platform, and that Cincinnati platform asserts that congress cannot charter a national bank in the teeth of the decision of the court, that congress can charter a national bank. [Loud applause. —*Tribune*] I will remind him also of

a piece of Illinois [the *Tribune* added “history”—*ed.*] of the time when the respected party which the judge belongs [to] was displeased with a decision of the supreme court of Illinois, because they had decided that the governor could not remove a secretary of state [the *Tribune* added: You will find the whole story in Ford’s History of Illinois—*ed.*], and he will not deny that he went in for overslaughing that court by appointing five new judges [Cheers and laughter. —*Tribune*], and it ended in his getting his name of judge in that very way, thus breaking down the supreme court, and when he tells me about how a man who shall be appointed on such a principle by being questioned, I say judge, you know you have tried it [Laughter. —*Tribune*], and when he seeks [says—*Tribune*] that the court will be prostituted below contempt, I say judge, you know you have been through the mill once. [Great laughter. —*Tribune*] But when I speak of all these things, I cannot make the judge fall loose from his adherence to this Dred Scott decision; if I may say so, and I mean by it no disrespect, he is like some creature that will hang on which he has got his hold to a thing, you may cut his arms and limbs off, and still he is hanging on. He is bespattered from the beginning of his life with war upon the courts, and at last he hangs with desperation [*sic*] to the Dred Scott decision. [Loud cheers. —*Tribune*]

Does not this show that there is a purpose [*strong as death and eternity*—*Tribune*] for which he adheres to that decision upon a principle that will make him adhere to all other decisions coming from the same court? [Vociferous applause. —*Tribune*]

[A HIBERNIAN: Give us something besides Dred Scott. —*Tribune*] [The *Times* made no mention of this interruption by a “Hibernian.” Republicans used fear and loathing of Irish immigrants to tar Democrats as often as Democrats used blacks to warn voters against Republicans—*ed.*]

Now, no doubt, you would rather hear something that don’t hurt you. [Laughter and applause. —*Tribune*] Now, on another matter, having spoken of this Dred Scott decision, Mr. Clay—my beau ideal of a great man [the *Tribune* had “statesman”—*ed.*] the man for whom I fought all my humble life—Mr. Clay once said of a class of men who, he supposed, would express all tendency to ultimate emancipation that they must, if they would do this, go back to the hour of our own liberty and independence, and muzzle the cannon that thunders its annual joyous return; that they must blow out the moral lights around us; that they must pervert the human soul, and eradicate the human soul and

love of liberty, and then, and not till then, they could perpetuate slavery in this country. [Loud cheers. —*Tribune*] To my thinking, Judge Douglas is now, by his example and his vast influence, doing that very thing in this community. [Applause. —*Times*; Cheers. —*Tribune*] When he is saying that the negro has no share in the Declaration of Independence, he is going back to the year of our revolution, and, to the extent of his ability, he is muzzling the cannon that thunders its annual joyous return. When he is saying, as he often does, that if any people want slavery they have a right to have it, he is blowing out the moral lights around us. When he says that he don't care whether slavery is voted up or down, then, to my thinking, he is, so far as he is able to do so, perverting the human soul and eradicating the light of reason and the love of liberty on the American continent. [Enthusiastic and continued applause. —*Tribune*] And when he shall have succeeded in bringing public sentiment to an exact accordance with his own,—when this vast assemblage goes back with these sentiments instilled into them, then it needs only the formality of a second Dred Scott decision, which he is in favor of, to make slavery alike lawful in all the states, old as well as new.

My friends, that ends the chapter; the judge can take his half-hour.

[Mr. Lincoln retired, having spoken less than his time by thirteen minutes. —*Times*; As Mr. Lincoln retired, three cheers were proposed and given with tremendous volume—followed by three more, extending to all parts of the public square. —*Tribune*]

MR. DOUGLAS' REJOINDER

I will now occupy the half hour allotted to me in reply to Mr. Lincoln. The first point to which I will call your attention to [is] what I said about the organization of the Republican party in 1854, and the platform that was formed on the 5th October of that year, and then put the question to Mr. Lincoln whether or not he approved of each article of that platform. ["He answered that already." — *Times*] I have told him that I should call for a specific answer to each of these interrogatories. ["He has answered." "You cannot make him answer," &c. — *Times*] I do not charge him with being a member of the committee that reported the platform. ["Yes, you did." — *Times*] I charge that that platform was the platform of the Republican party, and adopted by them. The fact that it was the platform of the Republican party, is not now denied; but Mr. Lincoln now says that although his name was on the committee, that he don't think that he was there. He thinks he was in Tazewell, holding court. [Disturbance. — *Tribune*; "He said he was there." — *Times*] I ask your silence, and no interruption. I want to remind Mr. Lincoln of the fact that he was here [the *Times* added "in Springfield"—*ed.*], and I will remind him of the fact. ["You can't do it." "He wasn't there," &c. — *Times*] [Here the *Times* reported that Mr. (Joseph O.) Glover, Chairman of the Republican Committee, interjected: "I hope no Republican will interrupt Mr. Douglas. The masses listened to Mr. Lincoln attentively, and as respectable men, we ought now to hear Mr. Douglas, and without interruption." ("Good") Lincoln deleted this pronouncement from his debates scrapbook, and thus it was not published in the 1860 book edition.—*ed.*] The point is this, that after I had made my speech in Springfield in '54, during that fair, he gave me notice that he was going to reply to me on the next day after the notice. I was sick at the time, and I stayed over to hear his reply to me, and to reply to him. On that day, this very convention of which he speaks was to meet in the Senate Chamber, while he was speaking in the house, and when he got through his speech, my recollection is distinct, that Mr. [Ichabod] Codding [prominent antislavery minister and lecturer—*ed.*] walked in, as I took the stand to reply, and gave notice that the Republican Convention would meet instantly in the Senate Chamber, and called upon the Republicans to go into this very convention instead of listening to me. [Three cheers for Douglas. — *Times*]

Mr. Lincoln [interrupting, excitedly and angrily—*Times*]—Let the Judge add that Lincoln went along with them. [This interruption was made in a pitiful, mean sneaking way, as Lincoln floundered around the stand.—*Times*]

JUDGE DOUGLAS—Mr. Lincoln says let him add that he went along with them to the Senate Chamber. I will not add that for I do not know it.

MR. LINCOLN [again interrupting—*Times*]—I do know it.

[According to the *Times*: “Two of the Republican committee here seized Mr. Lincoln, and by a sudden jerk caused him to disappear from the front of the stand, one of them saying quite audibly, ‘What are you making such a fuss for. Douglas didn’t interrupt you, and can’t you see that the people don’t like it.’” Lincoln had this entire, astounding report deleted from the 1860 book edition of the debates—*ed.*]

JUDGE DOUGLAS—But whether he knows or not my point is this, and I will yet bring him to his milk on this point. In the first place Mr. Lincoln was selected by the very men who made the Republican organization that day, to make a speech in reply to me—a speech for that party. He was the leader of that party, and on the very day that he made his speech there in reply to me, preaching up the same doctrine of the Declaration of Independence that niggers were equal to white men—that very day this Republican Convention met there. [Three cheers for Douglas. —*Times*] That Convention waited on him after its time of meeting to hear Mr. Lincoln’s speech, and then Codding, the leading man, marched in and gave notice, the moment Lincoln was through, that they would proceed, for they did not want to hear me in reply. [“Strike him again,”—three cheers, etc. —*Times*]

Another fact I have here, a newspaper printed in Springfield, (Lincoln’s own town,) in October, ’54, a few days afterwards, publishing these resolutions, and charging Mr. Lincoln as entertaining those sentiments, and trying to prove that Mr. [Richard] Yates [future Illinois governor—*ed.*], the candidate for Congress, did. Those have been published on Lincoln again and again, and never before has he denied it. [Three cheers. —*Times*] But, my friends, this thing of denial about acting on the committee, is a miserable quibble to avoid the main issue. [applause, “That’s so,” —*Times*] The main issue is that this Republican platform declares in favor of the unconditional repeal of the fugitive slave law. Has Mr. Lincoln answered that question? [No, no. —*Times*] I called his attention to it, and I predicted that he would not answer it.

[Bravo, glorious and cheers. — *Times*] How does he answer it? He answers by saying, "I wasn't on the committee that wrote it." [Laughter. — *Times*] Then I repeat the next question, about restricting slavery to those States in which it exists. I asked him to answer that—"Is it so, yes or no?" He says, "I wasn't on the committee at the time. I was up in Tazewell."

The next question is to prohibit the admission of any more slave States in the Union. I put the question to him distinctly whether if the people of the Territory, when they had sufficient population to make a State, should make a State recognizing slavery in it, he would vote for or against admission. ["That's it." — *Times*] He is a candidate for the United States Senate. It is possible, if elected, that he would have a vote directly on this question. ["He never will." — *Times*] I asked him to answer me and you whether he would vote to admit to [the *Times* had "a"—*ed.*] State into the Union with slavery or without, as its own people might choose. ["Hear him," "That's the doctrine," and applause. — *Times*] He has not answered that, has he? ["He never will." — *Times*] He has not answered that question. He has dodged that question under the cover of saying he wasn't on the Committee at the time—he wasn't present when the platform was made. I want to know if he were present in the Senate when the State applies for admission with a Constitution acceptable to its own people, will he admit the State if it asks? [That's the question. — *Times*] He avoids the question; [The *Times* here reported: "MR. LINCOLN—interrupting the third time excitedly, No, Judge—(Mr. Lincoln again disappeared suddenly aided by a pull from behind)."] Once again the interruption, if it took place as claimed, was expunged from the "official" transcripts published in 1860—*ed.*] at the same time he gives the Abolitionists to understand by a hint that he would not vote to admit such a State. Why? Why, he says that a man who would talk about each State having Slavery as it pleased, was akin to the man who would muzzle the press of the Revolution. [Great laughter. — *Times*] He says that that kind of talk is blighting the glory of this country. What is the meaning of that? The meaning is, that he is not in favor of each State doing as it pleased on the Slavery question. ["Stick it to him," "don't spare him," and applause. — *Times*] And now I tell you, I shall put the question to him again and again, and I want to screw it out of him. [Immense applause. — *Times*]

Again, this platform which was made at Springfield by his own party,

when he was its acknowledged head, proves that they will go for abolishing slavery in the District of Columbia. I asked Mr. Lincoln specifically whether he will do that or not, yet did you get an answer from him? ["No, no." — *Times*] He is afraid to answer. ["We will not vote for him." — *Times*] He knows I will trot him down to Egypt. [Laughter and cheers. — *Times*] I intend to make him answer there as well as here ["That's right," — *Times*], and I intend to show the people of Illinois that his object is not to answer on these points. ["Keep him to the point," "give us more," etc. — *Times*]

Again, they go on further, and pledge themselves to exclude slavery from all the territories over which the General Government has exclusive jurisdiction, north of 36 deg. 30 min. [the Missouri Compromise line—*ed.*] as well as south, and south as well as north. Now I want to know whether he is for that prohibition. [He'll never answer and cheers. — *Times*] I want to know these things, and when he answers them, I want to know his opinion on the further point, whether he will redeem the pledge of this platform to arrest the acquisition of any more territory, unless the practice of slavery shall have been therein forever prohibited. I want him to answer that last question—each and all of those questions. They are practical questions—questions upon which the Republican party was formed. They are the fundamental principles of the [*Times* added "Black Republican"—*ed.*] party, and I want to know whether he is the unanimous—the first, last and only choice of that party with whom he don't agree in principle. [Great applause, "Rake him down." — *Times*] He don't deny but what that platform was unanimously adopted by the party—he don't deny but what the man who is not faithful to it is faithless to the Republican party. I want to know whether the Republican party are unanimously in favor of a man who don't adopt their creed or agree with them in their principles? I want to know whether a man who is afraid to avow that he is with them, is the first, last and the only choice of the Republican party. [Cheers. — *Times*]

A VOICE—How about the conspiracy?

JUDGE DOUGLAS—Never mind. I will come to that soon enough. [Bravo, Judge, hurra, three cheers for Douglas. — *Times*]

But the platform not only lays down this, but has the other resolution "that in furtherance of these principles we will use such constitutional and lawful means as shall seem best adapted to their accomplishment, and that we will support no man for office, under the General or State

Government, who is not positively and fully committed to the support of these principles, and whose personal character and conduct is not a guaranty that he is reliable and who shall not have abjured old party allegiance and ties.” [“Good,” “You have him,” &c. — *Times*] Now the Republican party stands pledged that they never will support Mr. Lincoln till he has given pledges for that platform. [tremendous applause, men throwing up their hats, and shouting, “you’ve got him.” — *Times*] And he cannot devise an answer. He has not made up his mind whether he will or not. [Great laughter. — *Times*] He talked about everything else he could think of in order to occupy his hour and a half, and when he could not think of anything more to say, in order to get an excuse for refusing to answer these questions, he sat down before his time was up, and told you so. [Cheers. — *Times*]

Now about this charge of conspiracy. Mr. Lincoln to-day goes on and quotes a part of his speech—a playful part of it—about Stephen and James, and Franklin, and Roger, &c., and said that I did not take exception to that, and did not answer. He repeats that again. That was not what I took exception to. He has a right to use these playful words, and throw his words together as much as he pleases. What I took exception to was this. Afterwards he made a speech in which he said he intended that speech as a charge of corruption and conspiracy between the Judges of the Supreme Court, President Pierce, President Buchanan and myself. That gave the offensive character to the charge. He then said that when he made it, he did not know whether it was true or not [laughter — *Times*], but he said that inasmuch as Judge Douglas had not denied it, although he replied to the other parts of the speech three times, he now repeated the charge of conspiracy on Judge Douglas, and thus turned it into a charge of moral turpitude, and when he put it in that form, I did not say that inasmuch as he repeated the charge merely because I did not deny it—did it on my silence, not knowing it to be true. I would deprive him of the opportunity of ever repeating it again, by saying it was in all its bearings an infamous lie. [Three cheers for Douglas. — *Times*] He says he will repeat it until I will get into answering his folly about Frank [President Pierce—*ed.*], and Bob, and John [perhaps associate justices Robert Grier and John Catron—*ed.*]. He studied that out, and prepared that one sentence, and committed it to memory, to put it in his speech at Springfield, and carries it around now and reads it to the audience to hear how pretty it is. [Laughter. — *Times*] His vanity is offended because I won’t go into that beautiful passage about

building the house. [Renewed laughter. —*Times*] All I have to say is, I am not green enough to let him make a charge which he acknowledges he did not know to be true and then take up the whole of my time in answering a charge which I know to be false and nobody knows to be true. [Cheers. —*Times*] I have not brought a charge of moral turpitude against him, and when he or any other living man bring one against me, instead of putting myself on the proof and disproving it, I will say it is a lie! [Enthusiastic applause. —*Times*] I have lived twenty-five years in Illinois—I have served you with all the fidelity and ability I know how [“That’s so,” “Good,” and cheers, —*Times*], and he is at liberty to attack my public course and sections, to attack my views and conduct, but when he attacks my moral integrity by a charge of conspiracy between me and Justice Taney and the two Presidents, I repel it. [“Three cheers for Douglas.” —*Times*]

Mr. Lincoln has not character enough for integrity and truth, merely on his own *ipse dixit* [a dictum asserted but unproved—*ed.*], to arraign President Buchanan and President Pierce, and the Judges of the Supreme Court, any one of whom would not be complemented if put on a level with Mr. Lincoln. [“Hit him again, three cheers,” &c. —*Times*] There is as unpardonable presumption in a man putting himself up before thousands of people, and pretending to think his *ipse dixit* without proof, or fact, or evidence or truth, is enough to break down the character of the purest and best of living men. [“Hear him,” “Three cheers.” —*Times*]

I must pass on: my time is escaping. Mr. Lincoln wants to know why I voted against Chase’s amendment to the Nebraska Bill. I tell him in the first place, the bill already conferred all the power which Congress had, by giving them the whole power over the subject. Then Chase offered a proviso, that they might abolish slavery, which by implication would carry the idea that they could prohibit, but could not introduce it. Gen. Cass, I think, proposed to modify it so that they might either introduce or prohibit slavery and make it fair and equal. Chase refused to modify it in that form, and then Cass and all the rest of us voted it down. [Immense cheering. —*Times*] These facts appear in the journals and debates, where Mr. Lincoln found the charge, and if he had told the truth, there would have been no necessity for me to occupy your time in explaining the charge. [Laughter and applause. —*Times*] Mr. Lincoln wants to know why the word State, as well as Territory, is put in the Nebraska Bill. I tell him it was put there by me, particularly to

meet just such false arguments as he has been introducing [Laughter.—*Times*]—that not only the Territory should do as it pleased, but that the State should—that is, it should come in as a State with or without slavery, as it pleased. I mean to knock in the head these abolition doctrines of his that there should be no more slave States, even if the people wanted them [Tremendous applause.—*Times*], and it won't do for Mr. Lincoln and the [Black—*Times*] Republicans to say that nobody is against the doctrine of there being any more slave States.

What was the cause of the Missouri Compromise? The people of Missouri formed a constitution as a slave State, and asked for admission, and the Free Soil party being in the majority, voted her out of the Union, because she had slavery. Hence this first slavery agitation arose upon a State and not upon a Territory; and yet Mr. Lincoln don't know why the word "state" was there. [Great laughter and applause.—*Times*] The whole abolition agitation arose out of that doctrine of prohibiting the State from entering in with slavery or without it as it pleased, and that question is now in this Republican platform of '54—never been repealed yet—and every Republican stands pledged by the platform never to vote for any man who is not in favor of that platform; and yet Mr. Lincoln does not know that there are men in the world opposed to admitting a State with slavery if they want it, at the same time that this platform says that they won't receive a State under these circumstances. [The *Times* added: "He is an ignorant man" (Cheers)—*ed.*]

Now, my friends, you see that on these very points I am as far from bringing Lincoln to the line as I ever was before. He did not want to avow his principles. I do want to proclaim mine as sunlight in mid-day. The Democrats in principles are founded—Democracy is founded—in the eternal principles of truth. [That is the talk.—*Times*] The plainer those principles are avowed, the stronger the support they will receive. I only wish I had the power to make them so clear that they would shine in the heavens, for every man, woman and child to read. [Loud cheering.—*Times*] And the first principles that I would proclaim, would be in opposition to Mr. Lincoln's doctrines of uniformity between the institutions of the different States, and would declare in lieu of it the sovereign right of each State to decide the Slavery question as well as all other questions for themselves, without interference from any other State or power whatsoever. [Hurrah for Douglas.—*Times*] When you will recognize that principle, you will have peace, and harmony, and

fraternity between all the different States of this Union. Till you do recognize that doctrine, there will be a sectional warfare, agitating and disturbing the peace of this country. What does Mr. Lincoln propose? He says the Union cannot exist divided into free and slave States. If it cannot endure thus divided, then he must strive to make them all free or all slave, or be for a dissolution of the Union. [Cries of "he can't do it." — *Times*]

I am told that my time is up, and stop therefore. [Three times three cheers were here given for Senator Douglas. — *Times*]

[At the conclusion of the debate, when Mr. Lincoln walked down from the platform, he was seized by the multitude and borne off on their shoulders, in the center of a crowd of five thousand shouting Republicans, with a band of music in front. The Chicago delegation scattered for the cars, and so ended the GREAT DEBATE. — *Tribune*. But the *Times* reported: "When Douglas had concluded the shouts were tremendous; his excoriation of Lincoln was so severe, that the republicans hung their heads in shame. The democrats, however, were loud in their vociferation."]