

Freeport Doctrine helps Douglas win Illinois and lose nation

Freeport, Illinois, *Aug, 27*

The late August morning brought along a chilly rain. I have dressed the warmest I can, and I find it quite surprising to see such a crowd. Lining the street are Lincoln supporters; some of the crowd still is recovering from Douglas' arrival the night before.

As in Ottawa, Douglas arrived with the sound of a booming cannon still attached to his train. Douglas walked in at the head of the procession. This morning nearly five thousand greeted Lincoln at his arrival into the square.

Mr. Lincoln speaks first, the order swapped from the first debate giving Lincoln a chance for rebuttal at the end. Again he exudes that even and calm demeanor presenting an air of knowledge and sensibility. He appears to hold the attention of a crowd of nearly 15,000 people. I am impressed by his presence and it appears Mr. Lincoln's hub of supporters is less rowdy.

The town square is so crowded that Mr. Lincoln's chosen reporter and scribe must be lifted to the stage to sit with the rest of the press pool.

I listen carefully. In the last debate, Mr. Lincoln was left with Judge Douglas asking several questions of him. It was perhaps a devastating blow to Mr. Lincoln not having time to respond. Now Lincoln is listing Douglas' questions and responding with answers that emphasize his moderation:

"Question 1," he says, "I desire to know whether Lincoln to-

day stands, as he did in 1854, in favor of the unconditional repeal of the Fugitive Slave law?"

Mr. Lincoln's answer, "I do not now, nor ever did, stand in favor of the unconditional repeal of the Fugitive Slave Law."

His second question is: "I desire him to answer whether he stands pledged to-day, as he did in 1854, against the admission of any more slave States into the Union, even if the people want them?"

"I do not now, or ever did, stand pledged against the admission of any more slave States into the Union," he answers.

"I want to know whether he stands pledged 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?"

"I do not stand pledged 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."

Again there is a loud chorus of people chanting, "good, good.," With so many people there it is a nearly unpleasant sound to one's ears.

Mr. Lincoln continues with the fourth question, "I want to know whether he stands to-day pledged to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia?"

He answers it as he has done the others, "I do not stand to-day pledged to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia."

"I desire him to answer whether he stands pledged to the prohibition of the slave-trade between the different States?"

"I do not stand pledged to the prohibition of the slave-trade between the different States," he says.

“Question six, 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?” Mr. Lincoln answers, “I am impliedly, if not expressly, pledged to a belief in the right and duty of Congress to prohibit slavery in all the United States Territories.”

“Question seven, I desire him to answer whether he is opposed to the acquisition of any new territory unless slavery is first prohibited therein?”

“I am not generally opposed to honest acquisition of territory; and, in any given case, I would or would not oppose such acquisition, accordingly as I might think such acquisition would or would not aggravate [sic] the slavery question among ourselves.”

I listen as he explains that he answered those questions as the wording required of them, that Mr. Lincoln in his admittedly short time in politics has not pledged to any cause and promised very little in the way of legislation.

Mr. Lincoln then turns Judge Douglas’ questioning tactic upon him. He asks Douglas “could the people of a territory in any lawful way, against the wishes of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from their limits prior to formation of a state constitution,”

This puts Judge Douglas in a bind. If he says no he will anger supporters in Illinois and northern Democrats who want to limit the spread of slavery. If he says yes, he will anger southern Democrats.

Douglas tries to find a middle ground saying the legislature may not be able to do it directly – the Dred Scott decision said that – but can refuse to enact laws that enforce slavery. “The people have the lawful means to introduce it, or exclude it as they please, for the reason that slavery cannot exist a day or an hour anywhere, unless it is supported by local

police regulations. Those regulations can only be established by the local legislature, and if the people are opposed to slavery they will elect representatives to that body who will by unfriendly legislation effectively prevent the introduction of it into their midst."

Judge Douglas reiterates his denouncement of the Washington Union, a D.C. newspaper, which argued that "free states had not the right to prohibit slavery within their own limits." The newspaper's position could permit slavery in already existing free states.

Time expires and Judge Douglas steps back and allows Mr. Lincoln to have his thirty-minute rebuttal.

As he steps back he can't realize that history will call his response to Lincoln the Freeport Doctrine. Nor can he realize it will shatter Democratic Party and seal the result of the presidential election two years hence, putting Mr. Lincoln in the White House and the nation at war.

As Mr. Lincoln stands to conclude he reiterates the House Divided doctrine that Douglas has attacked, but with a moderate twist.. "I repeat that I do not believe this Government *can* endure permanently half slave and half free, yet I do not admit, nor does it at all follow, that the admission of a single slave State will permanently fix the character and establish this as a universal slave nation."