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The Freeport Debate

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THE FREEPORT DEBATE

by

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VITA AUCTORIS

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CHAPTER I

THE SETTING OF THE DEBATE

The Freeport Debate is one of the outstanding events in the career of Abraham Lincoln, for it was at Freeport, Illinois, that he forced Stephen A. Douglas to a critical re-assertion of his position on popular sovereignty—an assertion so clear and forcible as eventually to split the Democratic party.\(^1\) As President Theodore Roosevelt declared at Freeport in 1903: "Here was sounded the keynote of a struggle which after convulsing the nation, made it united and free."\(^2\) The debate was a focus of national interest because it brought to a crucial test the strength of the new Republican party of Illinois in its struggle with the entrenched Democratic party over the slavery problem.

The issues of the Freeport Debate were ten years in the making, so that their political significance can be appreciated only by a review of the political developments over the slavery problem in which Senator Douglas, Lincoln's great opponent, had a leading role.

Slavery was the central issue in politics for many years

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\(^1\) Albert J. Beveridge, *Abraham Lincoln, 1809-1858* (New York, 1928), IV, 143. Allen Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln, 1857-1861* (New York, 1950), I, 380: "Historically, this was the most momentous of all the debates."

prior to the Illinois senatorial campaign of 1858. At times the
problem would flare up to such heights as to embroil the nation
in political furor which could be settled only by compromise, while at other periods the slavery problem would recede slightly
into the background of the political arena to give way temporarily
to other clashes brought on by contradictory interests of the North
and the South such as the tariff disputes and the building of rail-
roads.

The slavery dispute began in earnest in 1818 when Tallmadge
of New York proposed the following amendment to the enabling act
for admitting Missouri into the Union as a State: "And provided,
That the further introduction of slavery or involuntary servitude
be prohibited, except for the punishment of crimes, whereof the
party shall have been fully convicted; and that all children of
slaves, born within the said State, after the admission thereof
into the Union, shall be free at the age of twenty-five years." There followed lively debates in Congress from which intense bit-
terness resulted between the North and the South over slavery.

Sectional conflict was placated, but not eradicated, by the

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3James Ford Rhodes, History of the United States, 1850-1877 (New York, 1910), I, Chapters I and II, 1-198; A comprehensive out-
line of the development of the slavery problem up to 1850.

4Annals of Congress, 15th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 1170. Quoted in Billington, Loewenberg and Brockunier eds., The Making of Amer-

5Marion Mills Miller, Great Debates in American History (New
York, 1913), entire fourth volume given to Slavery from 1790-1857.
Missouri Compromise of 1820 which provided for slavery in Missouri, though it prohibited it in the rest of the Louisiana Purchase which lay north of the thirty-six thirty line, Missouri's southern boundary; and Maine was admitted free.

Though the South was further placated by the Thomas Amendment concerning fugitive slaves: "Provided always, That any person escaping into the same, from whom labor or service is lawfully claimed in any State or Territory of the United States, such fugitive may be lawfully reclaimed, and conveyed to the person claiming his or her labor or service as aforesaid," the whole controversy initiated a basic attack on the Southern labor system and a challenge to her ethical standards. The Wilmot Proviso, an amendment to a bill appropriating funds for the Mexican War, rekindled the fires of sectional strife over slavery, for the aim of the proviso was to prohibit slavery in any new territory which the United States might acquire from Mexico as a result of the war.  

Slavery quickly became a political football. Southern poli-

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7 Billington, Documents, p. 299, from the Congressional Globe, 29th Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 1213-1217; "Provided, That, as an express and fundamental condition to the acquisition of any territory from the Republic of Mexico by the United States, by virtue of any treaty which may be negotiated between them, and to the use by the executive of the moneys herein appropriated, neither slavery the extension of which into the new lands was desired by the South nor involuntary servitude shall ever exist in any part of said territory, except for crime, whereof the party shall first be duly convicted."
ticians saw not only a challenge to their labor system and a threat to their social structure, but a danger in the political arena of being completely outnumbered by free states in the central government. As the number of senators and representatives from the free states grew, the power and prestige of the South would diminish if the South could not keep pace by the admission of new slave states.

Attempting a compromise on slavery, Senator Henry Clay of Kentucky and Senator Douglas drew up a number of resolutions which formed the basis of the Great Compromise of 1850. This compromise came at a time when the Southern states were speaking openly of secession, and it seemed likely that the Union would soon split into a free nation and a slave nation. Clay was opposed to secession even as a theoretical right: "And, sir, I must take occasion here to say that in my opinion there is no right on the part of any one or more of the States to secede from the Union."
Beyond this, Senator Daniel Webster saw the danger of civil war in secession: "Peaceable secession is an utter impossibility. . . . No, sir! No, sir! I will not state what might produce the disruption of the states; but, sir, I see it as plainly as I see the sun in heaven—I see that disruption must produce such a war as I will now describe, in its twofold characters."

Whereas the compromise, by its stringent Fugitive Slave Law, averted immediate danger of Southern rebellion, it increased Northern exasperation over the cruelties of slavery. A flood of anti-slavery literature following the passage of the Fugitive Slave Law was headed by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe's novel Uncle Tom's Cabin published in 1852. The book proved to be the keynote for new heights of emotional turmoil and protest.

An ardent abolitionist press had been promoting propaganda for years under the leadership of William Lloyd Garrison who, in his Liberator of January 1, 1831, declared war on slavery "... yea, till every chain be broken, and every bondsman be set free! Let Southern oppressors tremble--let their secret abettors tremble--let their Northern apologists tremble--let all the enemies of the


12Rhodes, I, 186-188.

13George Fort Milton, The Eve of Conflict (New York, 1934), pp. 165-186. Hundreds of propaganda works were produced annually effectively building up the belief that slavery was a sin in the eyes of God and man. None were more successful in this than Uncle Tom's Cabin. The meeting of Uncle Tom and Simon Legree became
persecuted blacks tremble. . . . I will be as harsh as truth, and as uncompromising as justice."\(^\text{14}\) James Russell Lowell, the Massachusetts poet, put his protests against the spread of slavery into verse in 1846:

\begin{verbatim}
They may talk o' Freedom's airy
Tell t'ey're pupple in the face,--
It's a grand gret cemetary
For the varthrights of our race;
They jest want this Californy
So's to lug new slave-states in
To abuse ye, an' to scorn ye,
An' to plunder ye like sin.\(^\text{15}\)
\end{verbatim}

Webster's motives for his part in the compromise were severely criticised in the Northeast as a bid for Southern support in the coming Presidential contest of 1852. Again the poets had their say:

\begin{verbatim}
So Fallen! so lost! the light withdrawn
Which once he wore!
The glory from his gray hairs gone
Forevermore!\(^\text{16}\)
\end{verbatim}

Walt Whitman wrote in his preface to *Leaves of Grass*: "... slavery and the tremulous spreading of hands to protect it, and the stern opposition to it which shall never cease till it ceases or 

\textit{stereotype for portraying the cruelty of the master to the slave; cf. Billington, Documents, p. 328.}


\(^\text{15}\) The Complete Writings of James Russell Lowell (Boston, 1904), X, 62, from his Bigelow Papers (1846); quoted in Billington, p. 298.

the speaking of tongues and the moving of lips cease.\textsuperscript{17}

Contempt and hatred grew with the volume of propaganda, while descriptions of slave holders became ever more sinister: "If you would, fix your mind on a Southern 'gentleman'--a slave-breeder and human flesh monger, who professes to be a Christian.\textsuperscript{18}

The South on the other hand had its own writers who pointed a damning finger at the child labor of the North while painting the life of the Negro slave as one of cherished bliss:

"There, unconcerned, the philanthropic eye, 
Beholds each phase of human misery; 
Sees the worn child compelled in mines to slave 
Through narrow seams of coal, a living grave . . . . 
By ruthless hearts, the drudge of labour made, . . . . 
While, nestling near, to bless their humble lot, 
Warm social joys surround the Negro's cot, . . . . \textsuperscript{19}

Such propaganda charged both sides of the dispute with unreasoning passions; emotion got in the way of a clear understanding of the situation, and hate increased until at last the war came.

The opening of the new territories in the 1850's beyond the Mississippi Valley brought settlers across the prairies into the present states of Kansas and Nebraska where they found fertile lands for farming. Northern settlers demanded that the territory be free because it was north of the Missouri Compromise line agreed

\begin{footnotes}


\end{footnotes}
upon in 1820. To settle the controversy Senator Douglas introduced his Kansas-Nebraska Bill in 1854 providing for the creation of two separate territories both of which were to be open to slavery according to the decision of the electorate at the time the territories became states.\textsuperscript{20} This power of the state or territorial electorate to decide upon the slavery issue within its own territory was the basis of Douglas' popular sovereignty which became the central issue in the Lincoln-Douglas debates four years later. In effect the Bill repealed the Missouri Compromise.

A storm of protest swept the North,\textsuperscript{21} as Douglas returned to Illinois late in the autumn of 1854 to aid his party in the election there. He was confronted by angry mobs, and he was burned in effigy;\textsuperscript{22} his voice was silenced in Chicago by the heckling of irate audiences and the tolling of church bells.\textsuperscript{23}

Abraham Lincoln had some support in Illinois that year as Whig candidate for United States Senator against Senator Shields, a Democrat.\textsuperscript{24} Douglas rushed to the support of Shields in order

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{20} \textit{United States Statutes at Large}, X, 277, 284; quoted in Billington, pp. 337-338.
\item \textsuperscript{21} Milton, pp. 167-170.
\item \textsuperscript{22} Allen Johnson, "Douglas, Stephen Arnold," \textit{D.A.B.} (New York, 1943), V, 400.
\item \textsuperscript{23} Freepo\textsc{r's} \textit{Lincoln}, p. 77. Milton, pp. 175-177.
\item \textsuperscript{24} Beveridge, III, 284-285: "He [Lincoln] was still a Whig and, in addition to the old line members of his party, some anti-Nebraska men in the Legislature agreed to support him. . . . But there was no shadow of a possibility of his election, unless his
\end{itemize}
to insure his own success when he would come up for re-election in 1858. Moreover, if Shields lost, Douglas' presidential hopes would be in jeopardy in the face of a Democratic defeat in his home state.

Though there were few speeches in the campaign of 1854, Lincoln had the opportunity of replying to Douglas at Springfield, and a few days later, on October 16th, at Peoria. When it became clear that he did not have a chance of winning the election, Lincoln threw his support to Lyman Trumbull, an anti-Nebraska Democrat, and thus helped Trumbull win the election. 25

This campaign proved to be but the beginning of a great struggle in which Lincoln and Douglas were the mighty combatants, first with Douglas' senatorial seat as the prize in 1858, and then for the presidential chair in the campaign of 1860.

Lincoln joined the Republicans in 1856 at the Republican Convention at Bloomington, Illinois, 26 and by 1858 he rose to become the leader of the Illinois Republicans when he was unanimously chosen to run in the senatorial campaign against Douglas, the recognized head of the entrenched Democratic party. 27

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26Ibid. III, 361.

27Ibid. IV, 211; "Resolved that Abraham Lincoln is the first and only choice of the Republicans of Illinois for the United States Senate, as the successor of Stephen A. Douglas."—Quoted
The campaign, with slavery as its central issue, was carried on through the summer and autumn of 1858, while both candidates canvassed the state in separate speeches and in joint debate. This campaign has gone down as one of the most significant political battles in the history of the United States.

Political developments in Illinois from 1854 to 1858 were closely aligned to those in the nation's capital. Only two days after the inauguration of President Buchanan came the decision of the Supreme Court in the Dred Scott case announcing:

> It is the opinion of the court that the act of Congress which prohibited a citizen from holding and owning property of this kind [slave] in the territory of the United States north of the line therein mentioned, is not warranted by the Constitution, and is therefore void; and that neither Dred Scott himself, nor any of his family, were made free by being carried into this territory; even if they had been carried there by the owner, with the intention of becoming a permanent resident. . . .

> Upon the whole, therefore, it is the judgment of this court, that it appears by the record before us that the plaintiff in error is not a citizen of Missouri, in the sense in which that word is used in the Constitution; and that the Circuit Court of the United States, for that reason, had no jurisdiction in the case, and could give no judgment in it.28

In one decision the Supreme Court declared that, slaves were mere property, they did not have the rights of citizenship, the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional, and Congress could not prohibit slavery in the territories.29 All important was the

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29 Bernard C. Steiner, The Life of Roger Brooke Taney (Bal-
clause ruling that, despite his residence in the Minnesota Ter-
ritory, Scott was still a slave.

This decision imperiled the whole future of the infant Re-
publican Party which had been growing so rapidly as to have been a
serious challenge to the Democrats in the presidential race the
year before, for the South now had a tremendously powerful legal
instrument to protect and promote her slave holding interests;
she was in a position to repudiate all her past concessions and
compromises as she looked toward the unchecked spread of slavery
into the boundless territories of the West.

Slavery leaders were quick in acting upon their good fortune.
Though the Northerners in Kansas were the first to draw up a con-
stitution, the proslavery men quickly countered on September 4,
1857 at Lecompton by framing a constitution of their own which not
only defended slavery but gave no opportunity for the voters to
reject it. This constitution was submitted to a popular vote in

and his colleagues] were attempting to determine national policy, to
settle constitutional law in such a way as to prevent the cata-
strophe which would result if one section of the country attempted
to dominate the institutions of the other." "No act of Congress had
been declared unconstitutional by the Supreme court since John

Andrew Wallace Crandall, The Early History of the Republican

Milton, p. 277.
which the free men refused to participate, thus leaving it to the
slavery men to adopt by a large majority the constitution with
slavery. After this, all that was necessary was the approval of
Congress and the signature of President Buchanan to admit Kansas
into the Union as a slave state.\textsuperscript{32}

At this critical juncture Douglas rebelled against the Demo-
cratic party line and, clinging to his principle of popular
sovereignty, declared that the elections in Kansas had not been
free.\textsuperscript{33} Having openly challenged Buchanan and the administration
on the issue, and thus winning back the confidence of the Northern
Democrats and many moderate Republicans, Douglas returned to Illi-
ois in mid-summer of 1858 for the greatest political combat of
his brilliant career. His political prestige had reached new
heights in the North because of his victory over the Buchanan
Democracy,\textsuperscript{34} and his position was now far more secure in Illinois
than it had been four years earlier following the passage of his
Kansas-Nebraska Bill.

\textsuperscript{32}\textit{Ibid.} p. 275: Buchanan was prepared to back the Lecompton
fraud, "[a]nd of course every Southern Democrat joined the presi-
dential phalanx."

\textsuperscript{33}\textit{Ibid.} p. 292. A second vote on January 4, 1858, in which
the whole constitution was submitted to the electorate, showed
that Kansas was overwhelmingly against a slave constitution: p. 293.

\textsuperscript{34}\textit{Nevins, I, Ch. X, 250-279, "Douglas in Revolt."} Douglas
had a clear warning from Buchanan not to rebel, p. 253: "Mr.
Douglas, I desire you to remember that no Democrat ever yet dif-
ered from an Administration of his own choice without being
crushed." He added: "Beware the fate of Tallmadge and Rives."
Douglas threw his head back and said: "Mr. President, I wish you
In the fall of 1858 the popular election of a legislature was to be held, and in turn the new legislature would choose the successor to Douglas' seat in the United States Senate.35

On July 9th, in Chicago, Douglas launched into an aggressive campaign with his first major speech, which was followed by Lincoln's opening speech on the tenth.36 These addresses keynoted the important issues of the campaign. Douglas then hired a special train with several cars to accommodate his friends on his tours, and five flat cars on which cannon were mounted to announce his arrival in the various towns throughout the state. He went first to Bloomington where he answered Lincoln's "House Divided" speech and defended popular sovereignty; then he went to Springfield. Lincoln followed Douglas' route, giving counter demonstrations in the towns to remember that General Jackson is dead." - Quoted from N. Y. Express, December 9, 1857.

35Direct election of Senators of the United States Senate did not come until 1913 with the seventeenth amendment. Milton, p. 317: "Neither Douglas nor Lincoln had their names upon the actual ballots. . . . Technically, Douglas appealed to the voters to elect pro-Douglas candidates to the Illinois House or Senate and Lincoln asked for Republican legislative candidates." This indirect election was decisive in the final outcome of the contest, for whereas Lincoln had a majority of the popular votes, Douglas won the majority of electoral votes.

36Abraham Lincoln, Writings, National Edition (New York, 1905), Douglas, July 9--III, 14-37; Lincoln, July 10--III, 38-66. Beveridge, IV, 226 quotes from these two speeches to point up the central issues: slavery and popular sovereignty. T. Harry Williams, "Abraham Lincoln: Principle of Pragmatism in Politics," The Mississippi Valley Historical Review, XL (June 1953), pp. 102-103; Lincoln defined his views on slavery at an early date and never changed them in any essential way; they were eminently practical and pragmatic.
where the Little Giant had just spoken. This political jackaling by Lincoln aroused so much bitterness on the part of the Douglasites that on July 24 Lincoln openly challenged Douglas to a series of joint debates.

They made the arrangements by mail for the debates, seven in all, which began on August 21 at Ottawa. As the press was tremendously partisan in its reports of the debates, each editor claimed victory for his man and utter defeat for the other. The issues introduced in this first debate provided plenty of material for the subsequent debates. Douglas inaugurated the question technique by asking Lincoln seven specific questions on his poli-

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37 Beveridge, I, 182: the title of the "Little Giant" was given him "[b]ecause of an effective speech at a Democratic meet-
ing in Jacksonville in 1834 when all others in his party were disheartened and despondent... a title which his work in the Legislature was to confirm and establish permanently."

38 Ibid. IV, 267-268; 271.

39 Douglas, as the challenged one, took the option of opening four of the debates beginning with the first and alternating thereafter. Chicago was not included because both had already spoken there. Correspondence between Lincoln and Douglas in arranging for the debates: Writings, III, 178-184. The debate schedule was as follows:

- Ottawa, La Salle County. August 21.
- Freeport, Stephenson County. August 27.
- Jonesboro, Union County. September 15.
- Charleston, Coles County. September 18.
- Galesburgh, Knox County. October 7.
- Alton, Madison County. October 15.

Writings, III, 183-184.

tical beliefs and commitments. Lincoln answered these questions one week later at Freeport and countered by asking Douglas some questions of his own. The second question, the one on popular sovereignty, was instrumental in splitting the Democratic National Convention in 1860, and contributed to the political downfall of Douglas.  

preferred Douglas in the 1858 campaign, but it did not go hard on Lincoln as did other pro-Douglas papers. Ida M. Tarbell, The Life of Abraham Lincoln (New York, 1900), I, 320: The debates got news publicity in the East as well as in the West because of interest in Douglas. Yet, as the debates went on, it was Lincoln who captured the greater interest and made the impression: Nevins I, 377.

41Writings, IV, 190-191.
42Beveridge, IV, 143.
CHAPTER II

POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY VS. CONTAINMENT AND ABOLITION

"Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution."

Such was the careful wording of Abraham Lincoln's central question addressed to Stephen A. Douglas at Freeport, Illinois, on August 27, 1858. It highlighted the main point of controversy between the Democrats and Republicans in the senatorial campaign, and it had important consequences in the presidential elections of 1860, for by it Lincoln forced Douglas to an explicit re-assertion and defense of his doctrine of popular sovereignty. Popular sovereignty had been the main issue in the Kansas Nebraska Bill which Douglas introduced in Congress in 1854, and his defense of this doctrine brought Douglas into disfavor with the Buchanan administration. The significance of Lincoln's question was that he posited it at the psychological moment, when the opening of the old wounds between Douglas and the Administration would spread the infection to cause more trouble between Douglas and Buchanan, and between the Northern and Southern Democrats. Lincoln knew precisely the significance of the question and therefore later dwelt long

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1Writings, III, 249: The Freeport Debate, August 27, 1858. This question was the second in a series of four questions.
on the issues aroused at Freeport. Douglas too was aware of the potential disaster in Lincoln's interrogations.  

To understand the controversy over popular sovereignty it will be helpful to review the political development of the theory in Douglas' career, its applications, and its consequences. But first, a word on the notion of sovereignty in general.

The concept of sovereignty is one of the most difficult to define with accuracy in view of the confusion introduced by the diverse use and abuse of the term in philosophy and history. Jacques Maritain in his *Man and the State* gives a very scholarly treatment of this subject in tracing the evolution of the term through Bodin, Hobbes, and Rousseau. The utter confusion in the use of the term, and the untenable philosophical foundations of these theorists, led Maritain beyond the exposition of the problem to the impracticable conclusion that the term should be "scrapped."

However, there is a way to describe the general notion with some satisfaction: "It is evident that there are two major ideas

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2Writings, III, 294: "I know Mr. Lincoln's object: he wants to divide the Democratic party, in order that he may defeat me and get to the Senate."--were the last words of Douglas' reply.


5Ibid. p. 53.
involved in the concept of sovereignty. For one thing, the state must possess the authority or the right to make final decisions and to undertake actions that will be binding on all individuals and subsidiary groups within it. Second, the state must or should possess the power -- the actual physical and coercive power -- to guarantee compliance with its will.\(^6\) Thus explained, sovereignty seems in accord with the proper function of the state, to provide for the common good, for without such a right and power it would be impossible to keep due order in the state.

Under this general notion of sovereignty is found that of popular sovereignty. This doctrine as Douglas used it was a development of squatter's sovereignty.\(^7\) The Little Giant held to the principle against both Northern abolitionists and Southern slavery expansionists, for it was on the issue of slavery that popular sovereignty had significance through the 1850's.

In the Compromise debates of 1850 Douglas said, "It is no violation of the Southern rights to prohibit slavery, nor of Northern rights to leave the people to decide the question for them-


\(^7\)D.A.B., V, 400; refers to "The Genesis of Popular Sovereignty," The Iowa Journal of History and Politics, January, 1905.
selves,8 Since popular sovereignty rested on the right of the people to govern themselves, Douglas replied to Jefferson Davis' question as to when a people of a territory had the right to legislate on slavery by saying:

If, Sir, there are enough to require a government, and to authorize you to allow them to govern themselves, there are enough to govern themselves upon the subject of Negroes as well as concerning the other species of property and other descriptions of institutions. You will concede that government is necessary—a government founded upon principles of Popular Sovereignty and the right of the people to enact their own laws. . . . You confer upon them the right to legislate upon all rightful subjects of legislation except Negroes. Why except the Negro? Why except African slavery? If the Inhabitants are competent to govern themselves upon all other subjects. . . they are competent also to enact laws to govern themselves in regard to slavery and Negroes.9

Douglas' basic assumption regarding the negro slave was that he was a species of property over which slave-holders had absolute personal rights. Though he did not consider the institution morally evil, he did not crusade for its extension. He was trying to keep the widest possible middle ground on the issue, for extremist views were not the means to national power. As Lincoln said of him, Douglas had "no very vivid impression that the negro is human, and consequently has no idea that there can be any moral question in legislating about him."10

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10Beveridge, III, 269.
The legislature of the State of Illinois supported Douglas' position on popular sovereignty when in 1851 it endorsed the resolution:

Resolved, That our Liberty and Independence are based upon the right of the people to form for themselves such a government as they may choose; that this great principle, the birthright of freemen, the gift of Heaven, secured to us by the blood of our ancestors, ought to be secured to future generations, and no limitation ought to be applied to this power in the organization of any Territory of the United States, of either Territorial Government or State Constitution, provided the government so established shall be Republican and in conformity with the Constitution of the United States.11

Because he believed that this principle should be extended to all the territories, Douglas inserted in the Kansas-Nebraska Bill of 1854 a clause explaining that, "the true intent and meaning of the Act was not to legislate Slavery into any State or Territory, or to exclude it therefrom, but to leave the people thereof perfectly free to form and regulate their own domestic institutions in their own way, subject only to the Constitution of the United States."12

Before a further account of the development of popular sovereignty, the central issue of the Freeport debate, it will obviate endless confusion to outline briefly Douglas' and Lincoln's respective positions, for it is necessary to shift ground constantly in studying the Great Debate in order to keep the matter

12Logan, p. 48.
13Writings, III, 213.
in true perspective. At times there is an urge to cry out with Lincoln: "Popular sovereignty! Everlasting popular sovereignty! . . . What is popular sovereignty? . . . . What do those terms mean? What do those terms mean when used now?"13

At one time Lincoln blames Douglas' popular sovereignty principle for the national turmoil over slavery; at another time he denies flatly that Douglas deserves the credit he claimed for himself in defending the doctrine. Rather, said Lincoln, the larger credit should go to the Republicans for defending this great principle of the Declaration of Independence.14 When taken in context, it is clear that both Lincoln and Douglas are consistent in their policies, though a change of emphasis or perspective shifts the import of their positions. Lincoln's apparently contradictory claims are explained when it is understood that he championed popular sovereignty in the territories as the right of the people to govern themselves, yet subject to the federal government in matters involving the national welfare, and consistent with the traditional commitments of the Union as he saw them: i.e., restriction of slavery and gradual abolition.

Douglas was personally inclined to eventual confinement of slavery throughout the nation, but he looked to this as a very slow

14Writings, III, 213; III, 44-46.
process, and he predicted that the cause of freedom would steadily advance over the years, while slavery quietly receded.  

Popular sovereignty was not only applied to slavery, but also to the Mormon troubles in Utah where polygamy became involved in the Douglas' doctrine. If the people of a territory were to be free of Congressional intervention, the Mormons of Utah would have a right to their own "peculiar institution," and they might enter the Union as a polygamous state. The Douglasites tried in vain to ignore this issue, for slavery and polygamy sat heavily on popular sovereignty because the North was against slavery, and everyone was opposed to legalized polygamy.

By 1857 the Mormon revolt in Utah had become a major political problem to which the Republicans pointed as a natural consequence of popular sovereignty. On June 12th Douglas, in a speech in the Hall of Representatives at Springfield, denounced the Mormon revolt as treacherous and treasonable, and he called for

15Beveridge, III, 109. Douglas was plagued for many years by political enemies attempting to undermine his compromise by the accusation that he was a slave holder. This was due to his first wife's inheritance from her father, Colonel Robert Martin, who left her one hundred and fifty slaves in Mississippi. Douglas, however, refused to accept any property in slaves in his own name.—Ibid. III, 165; 235-236; Milton, pp. 34-35. Beveridge has a note, III, 236, giving an alleged eye-witness account of a barbecue for the slaves on the Douglas plantation. The account was published in the Washington Union, August 19, 1853. More detailed charges are found in the Illinois Journal, January 9, 1855, and noted by Beveridge, III, 281.

16Ibid.III, 236-237. The Mormon issue was settled peaceably in June, 1858 when Utah submitted: Nevins, I, 323-325.
17Beveridge, IV, 139.
the immediate abolition by Congress of the Utah Territorial Government. Popular sovereignty, he asserted, did not apply to the Mormons because they were not citizens but outlaws who had rejected the sovereignty of the United States. Popular sovereignty, in the hands of responsible citizens, he continued, would put an end to sectional strife and resolve the slavery problem peaceably.

Thus, by reverting to the slavery issue in his speech, Douglas circumvented the obvious question as to what should be done about polygamy if the Mormons were to submit to the national government in all other matters.

A year later, on July 9, 1858, in Chicago, Douglas, while defending the principle of popular sovereignty, declared: "I regard the Lecompton battle as having been fought and the victory won, because the arrogant demand for the admission of Kansas under the Lecompton Constitution unconditionally, whether her people wanted it or not, has been abandoned, and the principle which recognizes the right of the people to decide for themselves has been submitted in its place. . . . I devoted my best energies--all my energies, mental and physical--to the vindication of the great principle. . . ."20

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18 Ibid. IV, 140-141.
19 Ibid. III, 16.
20 Writings, III, 16.
Douglas reminded his audience that the Illinois Legislature had supported him in his position on popular sovereignty in 1851, and that in view of a formal resolution of the State's House of Representatives endorsing that principle in the territories, he regarded it his duty to promote popular sovereignty in his Kansas-Nebraska Bill.\(^\text{21}\) Just how far popular sovereignty could go Douglas failed to say. It was at this weakness in the Little Giant's position that Lincoln was to hammer until the dike of Democratic unity broke. Did the people of a state or territory have a right to act against the central government in the formation of their constitutions? The issue behind the theory was: Could a territory or state exclude slavery despite the Dred Scott decision? And if so, why?

Thus, the central theme of Douglas for almost ten years before the 1858 campaign was popular sovereignty, and on the soundness of that principle he would stand or fall. The principle served him well, for it was the *via media* between the demands of the Southern

\(^{21}\) *Writings*, III, 19-21: "Hence what was my duty in 1854, when it became necessary to bring forward a bill for the organization of the Territories of Kansas and Nebraska? Was it not my duty, in obedience to the Illinois platform, to your standing instructions to your Senators, adopted with almost entire unanimity, to incorporate in that bill the great principle of self-government, declaring that it was 'the true intent and meaning of the Act not to legislate slavery into any State or Territory, or 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 Constitution of the United States'. I did incorporate that principle in the Kansas-Nebraska Bill, and perhaps I did as much as any living man in the enactment of the bill, thus establishing the doctrine in the public policy of the country."
radicals and the Northern abolitionists. At first, it had reconciled enough of the nation to put off threats of immediate secession, at least to the extent that both sections were willing to wait and see who could win the upper hand under the compromise principles. Yet, with the growing extremist clamor in the North and the South for all-free or all-slave national legislation, the "great principle" gradually began to break down in theory and practice. Though popular sovereignty collapsed in the campaign of 1858, Douglas did not realize the extent of its breakdown until the Democratic National Convention at Charleston in 1860, for he believed in popular sovereignty not only as an expedient by also as a principle.

Though popular sovereignty was formulated and implemented by Douglas and his followers in an attempt to save the Union, to allay sectional strife, to guarantee peace among the states, and

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23 Randall, Lincoln the President, I, 81. Writings, III, 25-37: Here Douglas answers Lincoln's "House Divided" speech, lashing out against enforced uniformity of institutions imposed by the federal government on every state, for such he believed the policies of Lincoln to imply. At the same time he declared with regard to the Negro: "I am opposed to negro equality. I repeat that this nation is a white people,--a people composed of European descendants, a people that has established this government for themselves and their posterity,--and I am in favor of preserving, not only the purity of blood, but the purity of the government from any mixture or amalgamation with inferior races."--III, 33-34. Change but a few words and one might take the above as a paragraph out of Hitler's Mein Kampf; e. g., in the translation of John Chamberlain (New York, 1939), p. 595: "The highest purpose of the folkish state is the care for the preservation of those racial
to smooth over the great ideological and social conflict caused by slavery, yet it was a fundamentally unsound principle for it conceded both sides of the issue at the same time that it denied them. Douglas' position in 1858 was intrinsically contradictory. Popular sovereignty said to the South that slavery could not be abolished; to the North it said that slavery could not enter a territory if it were outlawed by the will of the people in that territory. By what right could it be outlawed except on the grounds that it was itself wrong? Douglas said the Constitution and the federal laws must be obeyed, yet, the state and territorial governments could, by prohibiting slavery, legislate in contradiction to the federal government, for the Supreme Court had decreed that slave property could be brought into any part of the national domain. Douglas' popular sovereignty, it seemed, was the road to madness in government. The issue had to be resolved one way or the other, in favor of local police control or of federal law.

At first glance one might expect that the anomalous position of Douglas would escape serious challenge, since his policy seemed to be a workable compromise for the conflicting interests of the North and South. Compromises, after all, are usually somewhat anomalous. Yet, even apart from the Kansas-Nebraska disaster that

primal elements which, supplying culture, create the beauty and dignity of a higher humanity...." For Lincoln's position on slavery refer to page 81 of the thesis; also Randall, Lincoln the President, I, 123.
showed the impracticability of the doctrine, there was a constantly growing opposition to it on both sides. The Republicans were actively organizing forces for the fight against the expanding slave power. Within their ranks Abraham Lincoln stood preeminent in 1858 as their champion in Illinois challenging the Little Giant for his seat in the United States Senate.

Lincoln did not suddenly find himself at the head of the state party through the absence of other contestants for senatorial honors. He was not another Napoleon, suddenly shot up from insignificance to leadership of his people. For many years now Lincoln had carefully built up his political position while actively engaged in politics. Working according to the principles of justice as he understood them, he could not be awayed from a course once it had been set, unless more forceful arguments demanded that he abandon his first position. 24 Having evaluated popular sovereignty and rejected it, Lincoln campaigned against Douglas' cause in 1854. By 1858 Lincoln's opposition to Douglas was settled, and he was ready to attempt undermining Douglas' central policies for the nation to witness. The development of Lincoln's opposition to the Little Giant shows that Lincoln consciously and deliberately aimed

24Writings, II, 185: Lincoln believed a man should change his position" [1]f he afterward thought he had been wrong." Cf. Randall Lincoln the President, I, 3-4, 47, 108.
at wrecking the Democratic cause and achieving the supremacy of Republican anti-slavery principles over popular sovereignty. The Republican national victory in 1860 came not by a chance split in the Democratic party, but as a result of the long planned Republican battle that reached its climax two years earlier in Illinois, where at Freeport Douglas was so openly and definitely committed to popular sovereignty as to make that split inevitable. It was in large part due to the Great Debate of 1858 that Lincoln won his claim to the presidential nomination in 1860.

In his rejoinder at Freeport, Lincoln declared: "He [Douglas] says if I should vote for the admission of a slave State I would be voting for the dissolution of the Union, because I hold that the Union cannot permanently exist half slave and half free. 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 an universal slave nation." This is a concise statement of Lincoln's plan for compromise when compromise is absolutely necessary to save the Union, but it also implies Lincoln's conviction that slavery should be gradually and ultimate-

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25 Beveridge, IV, 143, 302-303, 337. Milton, p. 517, blames Buchanan's opposition and the "weight of administration influence in Southern Democratic conventions" for Douglas' failure. It was popular sovereignty, however, that was behind this opposition.

26 Writings, II, 299.
ly abolished. Earlier in the debate he said: "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." Later he said:

I should be exceedingly glad to know that there would never be another slave State admitted into the Union; but I must add that if slavery shall be kept out of the Territories during the territorial existence of any one given Territory, and then the people shall, having a fair chance and a clear field, when they come to adopt the constitution, do such an extraordinary thing as to adopt a slave constitution, uninfluenced by the actual presence of the institution among them, I see no alternative, if we own the country, but to admit them into the Union.

Though he was not willing to go all the way to the abolitionist camp of the Liberator brand, Lincoln was convinced that every peaceable means should be tried to confine slavery to the already existing slave states; then he could work for eventual abolition within those states.

Lincoln had well over two decades of political experience to back him at Freeport, though he was not in office all those years. He had been in the Illinois House of Representatives from 1834 to 1846. It was at that time he began to move up in political influence. He was a representative in Congress from 1847 to 1849. During this stay in Congress he proposed his famous "Spot Resolutions," December 22, 1847, concerning the alleged Mexican attack

27Ibid. III, 245.
28Ibid. III, 247.
29J. Randall, "Lincoln, Abraham,"DAB (New York, 1943), XI, 244.
provoking the war. 30

In a speech in the United States House of Representatives, January 12, 1848, Lincoln took a position regarding revolutionary activities which was hardly compatible with his later action on Southern secession:

Any people anywhere being inclined and having the power have the right to rise up and shake off the existing government, and form a new one that suits them better. This is a most valuable, a most sacred right—a right which we hope and believe is to liberate the world. Nor is this right confined to cases in which the whole people of an existing government may choose to exercise it. Any portion of such people that can may revolutionize and make their own of so much of the territory as they inhabit. More than this, a majority of any portion of such people may revolutionize, putting down a minority, intermingled with or near about them, who may oppose this movement. Such minority was precisely the case of the Tories of our own revolution. 31

This involves one of the most striking reversals of policy on the part of Lincoln that we might point to in view of the Civil War. Yet, as far as the slavery question itself goes, it does not affect his position for, in context, Lincoln is talking about revolution seeking freedom from oppression, not about secession for the perpetuation of slavery. He never veered from his commitment to the ideal of liberty for all, as is clearly seen from his bill to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia moved as an amendment in the House of Representatives on January 16, 1849: "Resolved,

30 Writings, II, 20-21; from Cong. Globe, 30th Cong. 1st Sess., p. 64.

31 Writings, II, 37.
That the Committee on the District of Columbia be instructed to report a bill in substance as follows: Sec. I. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, in Congress assembled, That no person not now within the District of Columbia, nor now owned by any person within it, shall ever be held in slavery within said District."32

Seven other sections were added to the bill providing for necessary exceptions in the program and specifying the means of executing the plan. The principles behind the bill remained Lincoln's policy throughout his political career: gradual abolition of slavery, with just compensation to owners for persons already held as slaves. This was provided for in the fourth section of the bill:

Sec. 4 . . . : Provided, That such owner, or his legal representative, may at any time receive from the Treasury of the United States the full value of his or her slave, of the class in this section mentioned, upon which such slave shall be forthwith free: . . . . on satisfactory evidence in each case that the person presented for valuation is a slave, and of the class in this section mentioned, and is owned by the applicant, shall value such slave at his full cash value, and give to the applicant an order on the Treasury for the amount, and also to such slave a certificate of freedom.33

Lincoln's convictions regarding the solution of the national slavery problem were more clearly formulated in 1852 when he gave public expression to his hopes for a peaceful and gradual abolition

32Ibid. II, 121.
33Ibid. II, 122-123; From the Cong. Globe, 30th Cong., 2nd Sess., p. 212.
of the "peculiar institution of the South." His eulogy on Henry Clay, delivered in the State House at Springfield on July 16, 1852, was the occasion for this declaration:

If, as the friends of [negro] colonization [in Africa] hope, the present and coming generations of our countrymen shall by any means succeed in freeing our land from the dangerous presence of slavery, and at the same time in restoring a captive people to their long-lost fatherland with bright prospects for the future, and this too so gradually that neither races nor individuals shall have suffered by the change, it will indeed be a glorious consummation. And if to such a consummation the efforts of Mr. Clay shall have contributed, it will be what he most ardently wished, and none of his labors will have been more valuable to his country and his kind. 34

Since his attitude to popular sovereignty was that of adamant opposition, Lincoln worked to defeat the Nebraska Bill in 1854. 35 He always kept in mind the distinction between the abolition of slavery as an institution, and its confinement to certain states and territories. In his speech at Peoria, Illinois, on October 16, 1854 we see clearly the outline of his future attacks on popular sovereignty. In the relatively short compass of this speech Lincoln reviewed the history of slavery in the United States, the various compromises and attempted restrictions on slavery such as the Wilmot Proviso, and he also explained his own position in

34 Ibid. II, 173-174.

35 Ibid. II, 176; In a letter to the Democrat J. M. Palmer, he wrote: "You know how anxious I am that this Nebraska measure shall be rebuked and condemned everywhere."
the controversies up to that time. 36

Following this short history of slavery, Lincoln gave a simple, sympathetic exposition of the circumstances of slavery as an institution in 1854. With exquisite balance of judgment and appreciation of men's feelings towards slavery as a given fact inherited from past generations, he once again calls for gradual emancipation of all negroes, while at the same time admitting his own inability to prescribe as to all the details in the practical execution of such a plan. 37 A greater refinement of thought than ever before strengthened Lincoln's position, and an ever keener penetration and challenge of the weaknesses in compromise with slavery extension lent incisiveness to his words. Yet, he held for those compromises necessitated by the actual existence of the institution as it was found in the United States after the Revolutionary War. Lincoln believed, that the extension of slavery beyond the Missouri Compromise Line should definitely be rejected, 38 and the only thing that would force him to accept its extension would be a last resort in order to save the Union, for the issue of the extension of slavery into Nebraska, or any other new territory was not merely a matter of local interest, it involved the

36 Ibid. II², 179-189: This account of the slavery problem is most valuable in pointing up his personal evaluation of the issues.

37 Ibid. II, 191.

38 Ibid. II, 212.
Lincoln attacked Douglas' arguments for popular sovereignty by showing, contrary to the Senator's contentions, that federal intervention through the Congressional Ordinance of 1787 had effectively confined the boundaries of slavery. He pointed to the contrasting situations existing on both sides of the Ohio River and the Mississippi River; one side was a land of slaves, and the other was de facto as well as de jure free. Yet, Douglas held to his argument, and at Freeport declared: "... the people of a territory have the lawful means to introduce it [slavery] 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." It is precisely on this point that the issue between Lincoln and Douglas is joined.

Lincoln had developed his policy thus far when in 1856 he enlisted in the Republican ranks. His political affiliations for the past year had been somewhat unsettled as he himself says in a letter from Springfield on August 24, 1855 to Joshua F. Speed: "You inquire where I now stand. That is a disputed point. I think I am a Whig; but others say there are no Whigs, and that I am an Abolitionist. When I was at Washington, I voted for the Wilmot Proviso as good as forty times; and I never heard of any

39Ibid. II, 212.
40Ibid. II, 226-227.
41Ibid. III, 264.
one attempting to un-Whig me for that, I now do no more than oppose the extension of slavery. I am not a Know-Nothing; that is certain. How could I be? How can any one who abhors the oppression of negroes be in favor of degrading classes of white people?  

After hesitating for some time, he finally cast his fortunes with the new Republican party in May, 1856. After this Lincoln's speeches were shot through with a new fire beginning with his address before the First Republican State Convention of Illinois, held at Bloomington on May 29, 1856: "This thing of slavery is more powerful than its supporters—even than the high priests that minister at its altar. It debauches even our greatest men. It gathers strength, like a rolling snowball, by its own infamy. Monstrous crimes are committed in its name by persons collectively which they would not dare to commit as individuals. Its aggressions and encroachments almost surpass belief... It yields nothing itself; it keeps all it has, and gets all it can besides."  

Never did he surrender to impulse, to passion, for he believed the only way to a peaceful settlement of the slavery issue was the.

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42Ibid. 246-247.


44Writings, II, 264-265.
way of just elections: "Do not mistake that the ballot is stronger than the bullet. Therefore let the legions of slavery use bullets but let us wait patiently till November and fire ballots at them in return; and by that peaceful policy I believe we shall ultimately win."45 In ending, Lincoln declared: "The conclusion of all is, that we must restore the Missouri Compromise. We must highly resolve that Kansas must be free! . . . We must make this a land of liberty in fact, as it is in name."46

And yet, the Union must be preserved. Lincoln would submit to a slave Kansas if by this means only the Union could be saved. "We will say to the Southern disunionists, we won't go out of the Union, and you shan't."47

After that, Lincoln's attacks on Douglas' doctrine became frequent and pointed. His demands for the confinement of slavery at all costs, save the disruption of the Union, became the major recurring issue in his political activities.


46Ibid. II, 274. The argument was not merely an emotional one, though the census reports for 1860 show only two slaves in one hundred thousand population in Kansas. Randall, Lincoln the President, I, 240. It was not at all decided in 1856 which side would win in Kansas.

47Writings, II, 275. The danger of secession became increasingly threatening, and there was more and more talk of it as the months passed. Lincoln at some length explained his position on dissolution of the Union in a speech at Galena, Illinois, in the Fremont Campaign in August, 1856: Ibid. II, 277-279. The substance of his belief was that the majority would not dissolve the Union, and the minority could not.
The next important encounter between Lincoln and Douglas came in June 1857 at Springfield, where on the 26th Lincoln answered a speech of Douglas given two weeks earlier at the same place. Again, the main points of controversy were Kansas, the Dred Scott decision, and Utah—three danger spots in the fight over popular sovereignty.

He called Douglas' popular sovereignty "a mere deceitful pretense for the benefit of slavery," used thus in Nebraska, but abandoned in Utah where the Senator was faced with the embarrassing "peculiar institution" of the Mormons, polygamy.

Lincoln made capital of this point:

But in all this it is very plain the Judge evades the only question the Republicans have ever pressed upon the Democracy in regard to Utah. That question the Judge well knew to be this: 'If the people of Utah peacefully form a State constitution tolerating polygamy, will the Democracy admit them into the Union?' There is nothing in the United States Constitution or law against polygamy; and why is it not a part of the Judge's 'sacred right of self-government' for the people to have it, or rather to keep it, if they choose? These questions, so far as I know, the Judge never answers. It might involve the Democracy to answer them either way, and they go unanswered.

After this, Lincoln gave considerable time to the Dred Scott decision, summing up his own view of it with: "We know the court that made it has often overruled its own decisions, and we shall do what we can to have it to overrule this. We offer no resistance.

\[^{48}\text{Ibid. II, 239.}\]
\[^{49}\text{Ibid. II, 291-305.}\]
This position is substantially the same held at Freeport. Lincoln pointed out with Justice Curtis that Chief Justice Taney based his decision on errors in history concerning the position of Negroes at the time of the Declaration of Independence, and he challenged Taney's and Douglas' interpretation of the phrase "all men are created equal" of the Declaration. Lincoln said "all" meant all, not just white people, or as Douglas would seemingly have it, former white subjects of the British crown and their descendants.

Lincoln's unanimous nomination as candidate for the United States Senate at the Springfield convention on June 17, 1858 was the signal to open the great political struggle with Douglas. The first attack, that of Lincoln's acceptance of the nomination, the famous "House Divided" speech, set forth the central issues of the coming campaign: "'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 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

50Ibid. II, 292.
In the course of ultimate extinction, or its advocates will push it forward till it shall become alike lawful in all the States."51

Once again Lincoln reviewed Douglas' "sacred right of self-government" expressed in the principle of popular sovereignty, and he condemned the Senator's use of the principle as a perversion and a subterfuge to advance the cause of slavery.52 He again examined the Dred Scott decision and said it was in fact a decision to "declare the perfect freedom of the people to be just no freedom at all,"53 for it had gone farther than Douglas' doctrine which left the territories free to decide whether to accept or reject slavery; the decision had declared it unconstitutional for Congress or any Territorial Government, to exclude slavery from any United States Territory.54

The attention given to this speech by Illinois papers, both Republican and Democratic, shows the importance that was attached to it within the state. Yet, except for New York, there was little national publicity as yet for Lincoln.55

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51Ibid. III, 1-2.
52Ibid. III, 7.
53Ibid. III, 5-6.
54Ibid. III, 5-6.
55Beveridge, IV, 224-225. Here Beveridge makes the statement "it [the speech] was, however, his most important move in the game for the Presidency, a game Lincoln meant to win." He refers to Whitney's Lincoln, I, 266, n 8: "While, however, his political friends were training him for the Senate he was coaching himself for the Presidency, two years thereafter." Yet, I have been un-
In the campaign that followed, Douglas' recurrent theme was that he had devoted his greatest efforts to "that great principle of self-government, to which my life for many years past has been, and in the future will be, devoted." He reminded his hearers that he had resisted even the federal Administration when they tried to countervene this principle; he "felt bound as a man of honor and a representative of Illinois, bound by every consideration of duty, of fidelity, and of patriotism, to resist to the utmost of my power the consummation of the Lecompton fraud."

Lincoln's contention was that Douglas did the right thing in resisting the Lecompton conspiracy, but that it was the Republicans, not the Douglasites, who defeated it in Congress. Whereas he claimed all the credit for the victory over the Administration, Douglas furnished only three votes in the Senate to the twenty furnished by the Republicans; and twenty in the House of Representatives to the ninety-odd by the Republicans.

As with the Lecompton affair, Lincoln tried to steal the Little Giant's thunder on popular sovereignty by his analysis of it in his

able to find any evidence that Lincoln at this time had any clear aspiration for the Presidency. He had thus far done little to base personal hopes for the Presidency. He was not in the councils of the great in the National Republican party. Neither his writings nor his position at this time offer evidence to ground the existence of such a hope.

56Writings, II, 14; also at Bloomington, July 16th--III, 109; at Springfield, July 17th--III, 111; etc.
57Ibid. III, 15.
58Ibid. III, 46.
July 10th speech at Chicago, a speech of the utmost importance for an evaluation of Freeport. He first discussed the matter at great length, stating just what popular sovereignty meant and how Judge Douglas contradicted himself by supporting both popular sovereignty and the Dred Scott decision, then he shot straight for the mark:

Popular sovereignty! everlasting popular sovereignty! Let us for a moment inquire into this vast matter of popular sovereignty. What is popular sovereignty? We recollect that at an early period in the history of this struggle there was another name for the same thing,—'squatter sovereignty.' It was not exactly popular sovereignty, but squatter sovereignty. What do those terms mean? What do those terms mean when used now? And vast credit is taken by our friend the Judge in regard to his support of it, when he declares the last years of his life have been, and all the future years of his life shall be, devoted to this matter of popular sovereignty. What is it? Why, it is the sovereignty of the people! What was squatter sovereignty? I suppose, if it had any significance at all, it was the right of the people to govern themselves, to be sovereign in their own affairs while they were squatted down in a country not their own, while they had squatted on a Territory that did not belong to them, in the sense that a State belongs to the people who inhabit it,—when it belonged to the nation; such right to govern themselves was called 'squatter sovereignty.'

After thus defining the meaning of popular and squatter sovereignty, Lincoln proceeded in his attack on Douglas' position:

Now, I wish you to mark: what has become of that squatter sovereignty? What has become of it? Can you get anybody to tell you now that the people of a Territory have any authority to govern themselves, in regard to this mooted question of slavery, before they form a State constitution? . . . . To-day it has been decided--no more than a year

59Ibid. III, 41-42.
ago it was decided—by the Supreme Court of the United States, and is insisted upon to-day that the people of a Territory have no right to exclude slavery from a Territory; that if any one man chooses to take slaves into a Territory, all the rest of the people have no right to keep them out. This being so, and this decision being made one of the points that the Judge approved, and one in the approval of which he says he means to keep me down, . . . he says he is in favor of it, and sticks to it, and expects to win his battle on that decision, which says that there is no such thing as squatter sovereignty. . . . The seal is absolutely put down upon it by the court decision, and Judge Douglas puts his own upon top of that; yet he is appealing to the people to give him vast credit for his devotion to popular sovereignty. 60

Lincoln took the wind out of Douglas' sails by showing that the Judge's claim for special credit in fighting for popular sovereignty was nonsense, for the right of the people to form a State constitution as they chose was not an invention of the Little Giant, but had its origins in the Declaration of Independence, and had been recognized from the foundation of the Union, and the Republicans were today its champions. 61

The issue could hardly be stated more plainly. Douglas, Lincoln charged, was contradicting himself, he was claiming credit that was not his due, and he was supporting the destruction of the very principle which he claimed to be peculiarly his own. It is curious to see how Douglas dodged the issue with meaningless distinctions and mountains of words, until at last he was pinned down in joint debate and forced to answer Lincoln's question as to what he was going to do with popular sovereignty in light of the

60Ibid. III, 42-44.  
61Ibid. III, 44-45.
Dred Scott decision. Douglas' constant evasions of the issue are almost pathetic admissions of crushing predicaments in which he was involved. Lincoln knew now that he had Douglas, and he would push the argument on popular sovereignty until he would get an answer.

In his speech at Bloomington on July 16th, Douglas attempted an answer to Lincoln's popular sovereignty probing by the distinction of calling the Dred Scott decision an abstract point of law, but the exercise of popular sovereignty a practical matter. He spoke as if the twain would never meet.

The same arguments recur frequently between Lincoln and Douglas from this time till Freeport, as indeed they appear throughout the campaign. The central points of controversy were the Nebraska Bill, Lecompton, the Dred Scott decision, abolition, and popular sovereignty.

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63 Beveridge, IV, 285. The major speeches of the campaign before Freeport were Lincoln's speech at the Republican convention at Springfield, his reply to Douglas at Chicago, July 10th, and his reply at Springfield on July 17th. Douglas' campaign included his opening speech at Chicago on July 9th, a speech at Bloomington on July 16th, and one at Springfield, July 17th. The first joint debate was held at Ottawa on August 21st with Douglas opening and closing. Most of the major issues of the debate here were repeated at Freeport, and they shall be considered in connection with that debate.
CHAPTER III

THE OPENING OF THE DEBATE

August 27, 1858, is the greatest day in the history of Freeport, Illinois, for the Lincoln-Douglas debate there gave birth to a new "doctrine" bearing its name. The little town in northwestern Illinois has a bright place in American history because of what happened that day. Life has changed very much since the Great Debate, but the spot where the debate was held is marked with a plaque and a statue of Lincoln to remind the visitor that here, a century ago, the Great Emancipator spoke of freedom for all.¹

The night before the debate people swarmed into the town of Freeport so as not to miss any of the excitement and fanfare preluding the mass rally at the debate itself.² There would be the booming of the cannon from the flatcars of Douglas' special train, the appearance of the Little Giant and his beautiful wife, the procession to the Brewster House, the town's proudest hotel. It is somewhat hard to recreate for ourselves the spirit of such a gathering. Radio, television, and newspapers bring the very

¹Freeport's Lincoln, p. 93. This commemorative volume has a number of photos of the statue and plaque.
²Ibid, 82-83.
latest reports into every home of America, while her citizens sit passively reviewing world events. In contrast, intense interest and a feeling of personal participation charged the crowds at political rallies in Lincoln's day. The nearest thing to the spirit of that time is, perhaps, that excitement aroused by the telecasts of political conventions such as those in August, 1956. Since the large halls necessary to accommodate the swelling throngs were lacking, it was the pioneer custom to stage political meetings in some clearing or field near the town where a small platform was set up to accommodate the stump orators.

Before the voters and their families the politician urged his cause and sought support from men who, on their part, did not hesitate to register loudly their approval or disapproval of what he had to say. Some of the comments recorded in the Great Debate point up the personal contact of stump oratory: "an old gentleman here rose on the platform and said: 'Be particular now, Judge, be particular.'"--"A Hibernian: 'Give us something besides Drid Scott.'" In protest to the Senator's repeated "Black Republicans," the crowd would call out "White, white," or a voice was heard, " Couldn't you modify, and call it brown?" Douglas' sharp retort

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5 Albert Shaw, Abraham Lincoln, His Path to the Presidency (New York, 1929), I, 213: re-enacted debate at Galesburgh.

4 Writings, III, 122.

5 Ibid. III, 230.
was: "Not a bit. I thought that you were becoming a little brown when your members in Congress voted for the Crittenden-Montgomery bill; but since you have backed out from that position and gone back to Abolitionism you are black, and not brown."\(^6\)

The social scene changed very rapidly after the Lincoln-Douglas debates, so that the picturesque methods of stump oratory never again reached the high tide mark of the Great Debate of 1858.

The crowd at the Freeport debate was unusually large due to the reduced fares on the railroads from Chicago to Freeport. The early morning was cloudy and chilly, and the sky remained overcast all day. Lincoln arrived in the morning from Macomb in the south of the state. For the past week he had been preparing answers to the questions put to him by Douglas at Ottawa, and at the same time he was formulating some questions of his own for the Little Giant to wrestle with.\(^7\)

While on the train to Freeport he asked Joseph Medill, editor of the Chicago Tribune, for his opinion on the questions he had devised. Medill objected to the second question: "Can the people of a United States Territory, in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State Constitution?" His objection, that the question would let Douglas out of a tight spot

\(^6\)Ibid. III, 277.

\(^7\)Beveridge, IV, 294-295.
on slavery because popular sovereignty would go over well with the audience, was supported by other Republican politicians who tried in vain to dissuade Lincoln from asking it.\textsuperscript{8} It was clear what answer Douglas would give because of his commitment to popular sovereignty. One purpose of the question was to widen the breach already existing within the Democratic ranks, for the South was growing more antagonistic to Douglas' principle of local legislation in determining the status of slavery within a state or territory, and the Buchanan administration was far from reconciled with the Douglas Democrats after the Lecompton affair in which Douglas opposed the administration's recognition of the pro-slavery constitution for Kansas. Within Illinois itself, the party was split along Administration and Douglasite lines. "The most striking feature of the Illinois contest" says Beveridge, "was the split in the Democratic party. It was Douglas's chief danger, Lincoln's chief hope, and both men knew it. . . . Lincoln, then, did not ask his celebrated Freeport question merely to hurt Douglas in the South."\textsuperscript{9}

Though Lincoln had been pondering the question for a long time, the suggestion to put it to Douglas during one of the debates came from Henry Asbury, a Republican lawyer of Quincy.\textsuperscript{10}

\textsuperscript{8}Ibid., IV, 295.
\textsuperscript{9}Ibid., IV, 296.
\textsuperscript{10}Beveridge, IV, 296-297.
He finally decided to do so at Freeport with the aim of forcing Douglas into open antagonism with the Buchanan Democrats of Illinois who were in sympathy with the growing Southern demands for the extension and protection of slavery in the territories.

Evaluations of the importance of Freeport and the other debates are strikingly dissimilar. For some the fate of the nation was decided there that day, it was the turning point in the career of Lincoln, the wedge that split the Democratic party;\(^{11}\) with Freeport "the fire-eaters were coming to fear, and the Administration was openly opposing, this Douglas doctrine."\(^{12}\)

On the other hand there were moderate interpretations following the line that Douglas' Freeport Doctrine, though it "led many State's Rights stalwarts to repudiate the Little Giant, it did not materially check the general drift in his direction."\(^{13}\) Others are somewhat inconsistent in their estimate of the debate, at one time saying Freeport was "the trap Lincoln set for him [Douglas]--a trap, moreover, into which Douglas really fell and thus lost the Presidency."\(^{14}\) At another time we read in the same author: "Sol...
on their merits, the debates themselves deserve little notice.

For the most part each speaker merely repeated what he had said before."15

The overall picture is summed up by Louis Warren: "Not only
did Douglas blunder in agreeing to debate with Lincoln, but also
very unwisely at Ottawa, in the first contest in the series, he
asked Lincoln a series of formal questions. He should have antici-
pated that Lincoln in turn might ask some questions which would
not be easily answered, and this very reaction occurred at Freeport
in the second debate of the series. "16 The real significance of
the event can be judged only in the context of its historical out-
come. After examining the debate itself, we shall attempt to
evaluate the effect of Freeport on the destinies of both men.

The Freeport Debate is not classical literature; it is the
forensic oratory of the Prairie; it is the product of an historic
occasion.17 In reading the debate, vitality and interest are to
be found rather than polish and rhetoric, though it has its share

15 Ibid. IV, 274. Confer Randall, Lincoln the Pres., I, 127-
128 for his estimate of the debate following Beveridge and Milton
in playing down its importance.

16 Louis A. Warren, ed. Lincoln Lore, Bulletin of the Lincoln
National Life Foundation, No. 778 (March 6, 1944).

17 Luther Emerson Robinson, Abraham Lincoln as a Man of Let-
ters (Chicago, 1918), pp. 59-60. Carl Sandburg, "Abraham Lin-
coln," Atlantic Monthly (February, 1947), p. 62: "One may range
through this record of utterance [Lincoln's writings] and find a
wider variety of styles than in any other American statesman or
orator."
of such excellence too. The value of the debate is in its arguments, its appeal to the conscience of America; and above all, in historical retrospect, it is significant as the origin of the "Freeport Doctrine."

Though the site for the debate and the speakers' stand was but a short distance from the Brewster House, a fine carriage had been provided for Douglas by his friends, but when he saw Lincoln ride off in a big Conestoga wagon crowded with farmers, he decided to walk in testimony to his kinship with the common man.

The debate began at 2:00 p.m. with Lincoln opening. He explained that he would speak for one hour, then Douglas would reply for one and a half hours to be followed by a one half hour rebuttal. Such was the general plan of all seven debates, the speakers alternating in opening and closing. Lincoln then took up Douglas' seven questions proposed at the Ottawa debate, and answered them in strict order, quoting exactly Douglas' words as reported in the Chicago Times.

Douglas had put these questions to Lincoln in his opening speech the week before in expectation of an immediate answer in Lincoln's reply. Since that would have given the Senator an opportunity to deal with them on the spot in his rejoinder, Lincoln

18 Writings, III, 243. The entire debate: III, 243-305.
19 Ibid. III, 244.
refused to answer the questions immediately, preferring to put them off for a week so as to have time to formulate his answers exactly as he wished, and also to have the advantage of the opening and closing which would be his at Freeport. 20 Lincoln said that he had "intimated" that he would answer the questions on condition that Douglas would answer an equal number put by him. 21 The Little Giant on his part did not pick up the hint at Ottawa, so he complained that Lincoln did not answer because he was afraid to commit himself. 22 Then and there, Lincoln turned to the Judge and asked him if he would agree to answer seven questions in his turn: "The Judge remains silent. I now say that I will answer his interrogatories whether he answers mine or not; and that after I have done so, I shall propound mine to him." 23

In his answers Lincoln was very careful about his phrasing, settling on a strict use of the word *pledged*, the word that occurred in five of the seven questions. 24 The questions all involved

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21 *Ibid.* Beveridge, IV, 297: Lincoln was characteristically slow in coming to a decision on important questions, but he was firm once he had made up his mind.

22 *Writings,* III, 234.

23 *Ibid.* III, 244.

24 *Ibid.* III, 244-245. Whereas "pledged" for Lincoln meant a formal promise explicitly made on each point at issue, for Douglas it seemed to mean any commitment which would follow upon the Republican nomination as an acceptance of any and all planks in the party's national platform. Confer p. 54 below.
The questions all involved, directly or indirectly, the controversy over popular sovereignty, Douglas' basic principle of government. In like manner, Lincoln's questions were connected with that central issue.

The first of the Little Giant's questions was: "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?"

The Fugitive Slave law was one of the major items in the Compromise of 1850 which Douglas was so instrumental in formulating, though he did not actually vote on it. The law drove many Northerners into the Abolitionist camp out of resentment over slave-hounding. The Chicago Common Council denounced the law as "cruel and unjust," and refused to order the city police to aid in the arrest of fugitive slaves. As resentment grew, many people, previously unaffected by the constant stream of Abolitionist literature, went over to their side in the face of the cruelties of commercial slavery brought vividly home to them with the seizure of fugitives. Douglas hoped to force Lincoln to a commitment against the law or else a repudiation of the "Black Republican" platform. The pro-slavery men and their sympathizers wanted support of the law, and pressed more and more to insure their property rights in slaves.

25 Milton, Douglas, pp. 68; 165.
26 Ibid. p. 77.
27 Ibid. p. 81.
Lincoln very simply answered: "I do not now, nor ever did, stand in favor of the unconditional repeal of the Fugitive Slave law." That "unconditional" left plenty of room for interpretation and Lincoln decided to make the most of it. He then went on to the next question, and treated it with the same brevity with which it was asked, just as he did all the questions.

"Q. 2.--'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?'" Behold, the issue of popular sovereignty! Lincoln replied: "I do not now, nor ever did, stand pledged against the admission of any more slave States into the Union." Not pledged, that is, absolutely by his own policy, or by a formal pledge to his party. As he had frequently stated, he was against any further spread of slavery unless it was the last resort in preserving the Union; besides, the admission of one more slave state would not necessarily permanently determine the nature of the Union. This was the middle of the road between strict abolition and the Senator's interpretation of popular sovereignty.

Question three was but another form of question two; it asked for Lincoln's view of popular sovereignty: "I want to know whether

28 Writings, III, 244.

29 Ibid.
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?" Again Lincoln answered: "I do not stand pledged" to such a policy.

The fourth question is interesting in that it shows how consistent Lincoln was once he had settled his political convictions. "I want to know whether he stands to-day pledged to the abolition of slavery in the district of Columbia?" Again the answer was negative. Lincoln explained that he was in favor of the restriction of slavery which would eventually lead to its eradication, but he did not advocate immediate enforced abolition.

After going through Douglas' questions in summary fashion, and making the Little Giant fume at his use of the word "pledged", Lincoln elucidated his position on the points beyond the strict verbal requirements of the questions. On the point of abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia he said, that he would be very happy to see slavery abolished there but only on the conditions: "First, that the abolition should be gradual; second, that it should be on a vote of the majority of qualified voters in the District; and third, that compensation should be made to unwilling owners." quoting the words of Henry Clay, he said that on these conditions he would be happy to "sweep from our capital that foul blot upon

30Ibid. III, 245.
31Ibid.
32Ibid. III, 248.
The conditions were precisely those he proposed in his bill to abolish slavery in the District and which were moved as an amendment in the House of Representatives on January 16, 1849.34

The fifth question read: "I desire him to answer whether he stands pledged to the prohibition of the slave-trade between the different States?" Not pledged, said Lincoln.35 However, commenting on the question in general, he said that as he had not considered the problem at length because of no prior necessity, he was not ready just then to make a mature judgment that he would consider a final commitment. Yet, even if he should conclude "that Congress does possess the constitutional power to abolish the slave-trade among the different States, I should still not be in favor of the exercise of that power, unless upon some conservative principle as I conceive it, akin to what I have said in relation to the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia."36

After proceeding from one particular problem to another, Douglas finally asked about Lincoln's position on total prohibition of slavery in all the territories: "I desire to know whether he

33Ibid. III, 248.
34Confer pp. 30-31 of the Thesis.
35Writings, III, 245.
stands pledged to prohibit slavery in all the Territories of the United States, north as well as south of the Missouri Compromise line?" To this Lincoln did not give a straight "No!" he said: "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."37 He omitted any further comment, saying that he had been full and explicit in declaring his position on that point.38

The extension of slavery into the territories acquired by treaty and war with Mexico was of primary concern to the South, for the new territories, it thought, should be divided equally by the North and the South as they had been acquired by their joint efforts.39 The Northern desire to exclude slavery from the vast domain stirred up new protests and hatreds, and called forth threats of secession as the years passed.40 The Compromise of 1850

37Ibid. III, 248.
38Ibid. III, 248.

39John C. Calhoun, senator from South Carolina, declared on March 4, 1850: "'How can the Union be saved?'--The North has only to will it to accomplish it--to do justice by conceding to the South an equal right in the acquired territory, and to do her duty by causing the stipulations relative to fugitive slaves to be faithfully fulfilled--to cease the agitation of the slave question. . . ."- Billington, Documents, p. 309; quoted from the Congressional Globe, 31st Cong., 1st Sess., pp. 453-55.

40Beveridge, III, 68-70.
merely served to postpone the final settlement of the issue till a decade later when it was settled on the battlefields of the Civil War.

Douglas' last question was: "I desire him to answer whether he is opposed to the acquisition of any new territory unless slavery is first prohibited therein?" Lincoln's answer was cushioned in conditions: "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 the slavery question among ourselves."41 Having thus cautiously, but honestly, answered the Little Giant on all seven questions put to him at Ottawa the week before, Lincoln propounded four questions of his own. They are, in contrast with Douglas', rather long in formulation and complex in thought. It seems that Lincoln phrased and hedged his questions so as to get just what he wanted from Douglas, without giving him a chance to dodge or quibble on words like "pledged."

These questions are the most important part of the debate at Freeport, though both questions and answers do not occupy more than one fourth of the speakers' time. The reason is obvious in view of the results of Douglas' commitments made because of them, and since nearly one half of the debate was devoted to wrangling over certain resolutions which Douglas claimed were Republican resolu-

41Writings, III, 245-246.
tions passed at Springfield with Lincoln's knowledge. This entire portion of the debate, except as an example of the dialectical skill of both speakers, is definitely of secondary significance.

Lincoln's first question was: "If the people of Kansas shall, by means entirely unobjectionable in all other respects, adopt a State constitution, and ask admission into the Union under it, before they have the requisite number of inhabitants according to the English bill,—some ninety-three thousand,—will you vote to admit them?" The English Bill was a measure introduced by W. H. English, and Indiana Democrat and Douglasite, as a compromise attempt to settle the Kansas trouble. The provisions of the bill were that the entire Constitution of Kansas be referred to a popular election, at the same time promising that if it were accepted, slavery and all, Kansas would be admitted immediately into the Union as a state though it did not yet have a population requisite for one representative in Congress; and besides, Kansas would be given a large grant of land usually given to new States. But if the constitution were rejected, Kansas would not be admitted to statehood until the required number for a representative to Congress had been reached. Douglas voted against the Bill, and the constitution was voted down in Kansas by 11,300 of the 13,088

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42 Ibid. III, 249.
43 Milton, 293; Rhodes, II, 299.
44 Milton, 293.
Douglas' refusal to go along with the Administration on the English Bill set Buchanan against him. Lincoln's question went one step further with Douglas and tried to see if he would commit himself to the admission of Kansas with a free constitution before having the requisite ninety-three thousand for a Representative in Congress. This would mean that the Little Giant would not only reject the English Bill, but that he would also support the very things it outlawed. If, on the other hand, he were to say "no" to the admission of Kansas under the specified conditions of Lincoln's question, he would be risking the sympathies of the free-soilers who were opposed to the English Bill bribes in favor of slavery, and who wanted Kansas in the Union as soon as possible with a free constitution.

The second question, the most important of all, was worded: "Can the people of an United States Territory in any lawful way, against the wish of any citizen of the United States, exclude slavery from its limits prior to the formation of a State constitution?" This question directly involved Douglas' great principle of popular sovereignty and all that followed upon it. This was not the first time both men went over this ground, for popular sovereignty, slavery extension, and the Dred Scott decision had been

45 Rhodes, II, 301.
46 Writings, III, 249.
constant refrains in their earlier speeches. If Douglas were to reply in the affirmative, that slavery could be excluded from a territory prior to the formation of a state constitution, the South would be in arms against him as undermining Justice Taney's great gift to the cause of slavery. If slavery were excluded before the formation of the state constitution, the Southerners felt that there would be but a slim chance of getting a slave constitution. Lincoln was in favor of the exclusion of slavery until the territory adopted a constitution and asked for statehood; under these conditions he would be content to let the territories decide for themselves whether or not they would have slavery.

The point of Lincoln's arrangement was that by this means the people of a territory would be really free to decide either way, uninfluenced and unintimidated by the actual existence of slavery among them. Only the week before, Lincoln in answer to a question from the Ottawa crowd, "Then do you repudiate popular sovereignty?" answered:

What is popular sovereignty? It is the right of the people to have slavery or not have it, as they see fit, in the Territories? I will state--and I have an able man to watch me--[Douglas sitting on the platform] my understanding is that popular sovereignty, as now applied to the question of slavery, does allow the people of a Territory to have slavery if they want to, but does not allow them not to have it if they do not want it. I do not mean that if this vast concourse of people were in a Territory of the United States, any one of them would be obliged to have a slave if he did not want one; but I do say that, as I understand the Dred Scott decision, if any one man wants slaves, all the rest have no way of keeping that one man from holding them.

47Ibid. III, 213.
This shows how intimately, to Lincoln's mind, the principle of popular sovereignty was linked with the major political issues of the day. On July 17th at Springfield, while outlining Douglas' scheme of attack, Lincoln said there were three main points:

The first is popular sovereignty. The second and third are attacks upon my speech made on the 16th of June, out of these three points—drawing within the range of popular sovereignty the question of the Lecompton Constitution—he makes his principal assault. Upon these his successive speeches are substantially one and the same. On this matter of popular sovereignty I wish to be a little careful, . . . Coming to the substance,—the first point,—"popular sovereignty." It is to be labelled upon the cars in which he travels; put upon the hacks he rides in; to be flaunted upon the arches he passes under, and the banners which wave over him. It is to be dished up in as many varieties as a French cook can produce soups from potatoes. Now, as this is so great a staple of the plan of the campaign, it is worth while to examine it carefully; and if we examine only a very little, and do not allow ourselves to be misled, we shall be able to see that the whole thing is the most arrant Quixotism that was ever enacted before a community.48

Lincoln designedly set his trap for Douglas. And why is the question called a trap? Because until this point the Little Giant was playing fast and free with popular sovereignty, always applying it to a problem in an ad hoc manner. Sly as a fox, Douglas squirmed out of many a tight spot with "that great principle of self-government, to which my life for many years past has been, and in the future will be, devoted."49 Lincoln was now going to out-fox the fox. He did it by bringing into sharper re-

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48 Ibid., III, 154-155.
49 Ibid., III, 14.
lief than ever before the contradiction in which Douglas involved himself with popular sovereignty on the one hand, and the Dred Scott decision on the other. To bring this point home with even greater clarity, Lincoln put his next question.

"If the Supreme Court of the United States shall decide that States cannot exclude slavery from their limits, are you in favor of acquiescing in, adopting, and following in such decision as a rule of political action?" Douglas' answer to this question was really no answer at all. Lincoln's question went beyond the usual range of the exclusion of slavery from the territories, which was handled in the second question, and asked about the power of the Supreme Court on the status of slavery in the states where it was already excluded. One can just imagine what the Abolitionist press would have done with Douglas if he said that the nine old men on the Supreme Court bench had a right to make them accept slavery. Of course he would not go along with that at this time, nor did his general policies commit him to such a position a priori. It seems that Lincoln's intention here was to offer Douglas a situation in which he would find himself forced to take Lincoln's own position on the Dred Scott decision, of trying to get the decision reversed. The question recalls Lincoln's speech at Galena in August, 1856, when speaking of the restriction of slavery by the restoration of the Missouri Compromise by a majority vote, he asked: "Do you [Democrats] say that

50 Ibid. III, 249-250.
such restriction of slavery would be unconstitutional, and that some of the States would not submit to its enforcement? I grant you that an unconstitutional act is not a law; but I do not ask and will not take your construction of the Constitution. The Supreme Court of the United States is the tribunal to decide such a question, and we will submit to its decisions; and if you do also, there will be an end of the matter.”

The Dred Scott decision of March 6, 1857 did just the very opposite, and we have already seen how Lincoln reacted. Douglas would have really caught Lincoln out if he recalled this, for as one author comments: "A majority of the Court were agreed that the Missouri Compromise was unconstitutional. For the Republicans to 'cheerfully submit' to it would mean that their party's sole excuse for existence had disappeared. But there was no thought of submission.”

The decision in effect declared that Congress could not bar slavery from the Territories. This meant that slavery could not legally be excluded from national lands. Lincoln wanted to know what Douglas thought about the force of such a decision as regards the already established states of the Union.

Lincoln's last question was, as Douglas said, "very ingeniously and cunningly put." It read: "Are you in favor of ac-

51 Ibid. II, 278-279.
52 Milton, 254.
53 Ibid. p. 244.
54 Writings, III, 268.
quiring additional territory, in disregard of how such acquisition may affect the nation on the slavery question?" This of course involved the Southern demand for more and more land for slavery because profitable cotton and tobacco growing demanded vast areas for large plantations. The South had for years desired expansion into areas favorable for their specialized agriculture which exhausted even the richest land so quickly. Cuba had been the land of promise; the Ostend Manifesto expressed the hopes of the South in boldest form. The Manifest Destiny expansionists of America looked forward to the day when the United States would control the entire continent. If Douglas, then, were to be over cautious in acquiring new lands it would go badly for him with the expansionists in the North, and with the slave-holders in the South. On the other hand, if he were to go whole-hog for expansion, regardless of slavery, the abolitionists would raise fresh cries against him. At every turn there were various interests to be trampled on or reconciled. Douglas knew his road must be that of reconciliation, for he was already at odds with the administration Democrats, and the Republicans were busy digging his political grave.

After propounding his questions, Lincoln immediately passed

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55Ibid. III, 250.
57Rhodes, I, 295, 395.
on without comment to answer Douglas on the set of resolutions which the Little Giant claimed had been adopted by Lincoln and Trumbull at the first Republican Convention at Springfield in 1854. This issue occupied a major portion of the Freeport debate. There were charges and counter-charges of deception and lying from both parties. The accusations arose from the debate at Ottawa the week before, when Douglas, in asking his seven questions, said they were based on certain Republican resolutions adopted at Springfield, and to which Lincoln was pledged as to a party platform.\footnote{Writings, III, 191-192.}

Strangely enough, right after this charge of a pledge by Lincoln to that platform, Douglas launched into a colorful resume of Lincoln's career to show that his questions were not asked out of disrespect for a man of such calibre. The account included such homely things as both men's struggles with poverty, Lincoln's grocery-store work, and his ability at telling an anecdote.\footnote{Ibid. III, 192. Randall, Lin. the Pres., I, 114: Lincoln denied running a "grocery," i.e. selling liquor.}

To these were added: "He could beat any of the boys wrestling, or running a foot-race, in pitching quoits or tossing a copper; could ruin more liquor than all the boys of the town together; and the dignity and impartiality with which he presided at a horse-race or fist fight excited the admiration and won the praise of everybody that was present and participated."\footnote{Writings, III, 192-193.}

Behind all this familiarity, however, was the determination...
to score his point, to win the greatest campaign he had yet been engaged in, so he drew a dark picture of Trumbull, and proceeded to his charge of a conspiracy on the part of Lincoln and Trumbull to abolish the old Whig party in Illinois, merging it with the new Republican party. According to the alleged scheme, Lincoln was to get Senator Shields' place in the election of 1854, and Trumbull was to wait for Douglas' in 1858. Trumbull however, having double-crossed Lincoln got Shields' seat, said Douglas, and now, to keep peace, Lincoln was being backed in the present campaign by Trumbull and the rest.

This was a counter-blow to Lincoln's charge that Douglas was involved with Buchanan and the Supreme Court in nationalizing slavery through the Dred Scott decision, a charge that was to be made in various forms and refuted most vehemently time and again.

Lincoln said he answered the questions because Douglas thought it worth while to ask them, not because of any personal commitment to the positions contained in them. He denied that he ever heard of the resolutions before Douglas brought them up, and then he made a point that decidedly discomforted the Little Giant: The resolutions were not passed at Springfield by any Republican con-

61 Ibid. III, 193-194. L. Ethan Ellis, "Trumbull, Lyman," DAB (New York, 1943), XIX, 19-20: Trumbull was an anti-Nebraska Democrat, next a leading Republican, then a Liberal Republican, and finally he returned to the Democrats. He served three terms in the Senate, from 1855-1873. He died June 25, 1896.

62 Writings, III, 194.

63 Ibid. III, 194-195.
vention since none met there in the fall of 1854 as Douglas had claimed. 64 Douglas, Lincoln said, got the resolutions from some meeting in Kane County, and he admitted no more responsibility for them than he would have for "a set of resolutions passed in the moon." 65

Lincoln then made insinuations of dishonesty which Douglas would throw back with equal sting. "It is most extraordinary" said Lincoln, "that he should so far forget all the suggestions of justice to an adversary, or of prudence to himself, as to venture upon the assertion of that which the slightest investigation would have shown him to be wholly false." 66 Lincoln engaged in word play and sarcasm, for the moment descending to the usual quips and irony of political debates. 67 He went on to support his charge against the Nebraska bill as a conspiracy to make slavery perpetual and national. 68 Senator Chase had proposed an amendment to the bill authorizing the people to exclude slavery from the territory, but

64Ibid. III, 250-251.
65Ibid. III, 251-252.
66Ibid. III, 252. Milton, p. 341: The resolutions were found to have been passed at Aurora, in Kane County, a section far in the north of the state. Douglas did not explain how the mistake had been made. The Chicago Press and Tribune charged the Little Giant with forgery and deceit.
67Writings, III, 252-253.
68Ibid. III, 253-258.
he had been unable to have it adopted. This left room for the
Dred Scott decision, said Lincoln, and that decision went far in
nationalizing slavery.\(^6^9\)

As for charging Douglas, two presidents, and the Supreme
Court with a conspiracy to nationalize and perpetuate slavery,
Lincoln contended that such was not the case; he had merely stated
the evidence that would point to such a conclusion.\(^7^0\)

This latter portion of his speech was pretty much a repeti-
tion of the Ottawa debate, where he had gone into detail upon the
evidence, and declared, that having reasoned upon the evidence, it
was his belief that such a conspiracy existed.\(^7^1\) With the argu-
ment advanced thus far by the end of his hour-long opening speech,
Lincoln gave the platform over to Douglas.\(^7^2\) He could be sure
that the Little Giant would not fail to match him in sarcasm, in-
cisiveness, and dialectical skill. What would really count though
would be the Judge's commitments in response to the four questions
Lincoln had proposed. Their importance went far beyond the immedi-
ate scope of the campaign itself.

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\(^{6^9}\)Ibid. III, 258. By "nationalizing" is meant that slaves
could legally be held in any of the states or territories of the
Union.

\(^{7^0}\)Ibid. III, 259.

\(^{7^1}\)Ibid. III, 217-221.

\(^{7^2}\)Ibid. III, 260.
CHAPTER IV

DOUGLAS' REPLY AND LINCOLN'S REJOINDER

As Douglas rose to answer Lincoln's opening speech the contrast between the two debaters must have been striking. An eyewitness account of how the two men looked at Freeport relates: "Lincoln was tall and ungainly with a lean face, homely and sorrowful looking, while Douglas was short and fat, easy in manner and his full face appeared to be that of a man whose life had been one of success and sunshine." The Little Giant rose to meet his greatest adversary in the most important speech of the Great Debate. Both knew how high the stakes were. No one realized more fully than Lincoln himself how powerful was this adversary he so persistently pursued. Douglas too was aware that he would have to show his best fight now, or else face defeat in his home state and on the national scene. The Liberator made an accurate appraisal of the contest on the day of the debate: "Senator Douglas is making

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2 Douglas' speech, Writings, III, 260-294; Nevins, The Emergence of Lincoln, I, 380, comments on the speech.

desperate efforts, which we fear will prove successful, to secure a re-election to the Senate."  

In his hour and a half reply to Lincoln, Douglas used all the dialectical skill at his command, at times reaching heights of rhetorical power. After appealing to the audience for their respectful attention, Douglas proceeded immediately to comment on Lincoln's replies to his interrogations. He again insisted that the seven questions were founded on the Republican platform to which Lincoln, as the first and only choice of his party for Senator, should be committed.  

Putting aside further comment for the moment, he first of all, "in order to relieve his anxiety," answered Lincoln's four questions which, Douglas claimed, were not at all based on the Democratic platform but prompted by curiosity alone.  

In reply to the first question as to whether he would vote for the admission of Kansas into the Union as a state after it had formed a constitution "by means entirely proper and unobjectionable," but before it had the requisite population for one Representative in Congress, Douglas at first avoided a direct answer, complaining that Lincoln should have answered the question

5Writings, III, 261.
6Ibid.
himself before putting it to another, so that there would be no doubt as to which side he stood for. Trumbull, Lincoln’s colleague, had regularly voted down any measures to admit a territory as a state before it had the requisite number of persons for a member of Congress. Let Lincoln say if he stood by Trumbull or against him. For his own part, Douglas held "it to be a sound rule, of universal application, to require a Territory to contain the requisite population for a member of Congress before it is admitted as a State into the Union." He had urged the same position in a bill in the Senate in 1856 as well as in a proposition regarding Kansas, but they were not adopted. Where then did this leave Douglas as regards the English Bill, so dear to the heart of President Buchanan and the Administration? He had voted against the Bill, but now that it was passed into law, he of course recognized it as an exception that Kansas had enough population for statehood; but as it had enough people to come in as a slave state, he believed it had enough for a free state.

Since he did not want to buck the Administration entirely, Douglas accepted the provision for the early admission of Kansas

7Ibid. III, 262.
8Ibid.
9Ibid. III, 263.
in so far as population was concerned; but he did not want to anger the abolitionists still more by limiting this exception to the contingency that Kansas come in as a slave state in order to take advantage of the privilege. Though such a position would satisfy the anti-slavery men, it undermined the whole point of the English Bill as a political bribe to Kansas to adopt slavery. However, since Kansas had rejected the English Bill earlier that month by an overwhelming majority of the voters, there was little danger that the Senator's opinion would very much inflame the Administration as they were already disgusted with the business, for their scheme to abate the Kansas turmoil had been defeated.  

Right from the beginning there was little hope that Kansas would accept slavery, but the bill did appease the South for the time since it was, at least in principle, a recognition of their rights.  

The second question was to cause Douglas the most trouble. Douglas, apparently, was aware of its importance, for he gave it the longest answer of all four queries, and he took pains to make himself clear. It is because of the precision and forthrightness of his reply, at a time the nation held him in the focus of its interest, that his answer to Lincoln is so important. His declara-

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11 Beveridge, IV, 199, n. 3.
12 Writings, III, 263-266.
tion of popular sovereignty became known as the Freeport Doctrine, and it was to contribute to his undoing on the national scene. Douglas repeated the question almost verbatim: "Can 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 the formation of a State constitution?" The Little Giant came out with an emphatic affirmation that the people of a territory had the right to do so. Besides, he claimed, Lincoln had heard him affirm the same position "a hundred times from every stump in Illinois."14 He had answered the question again and again in 1854, 1855, and 1856, said the Senator, and Lincoln had no right to pretend ignorance on the point.15 Then came the statement of the Freeport Doctrine:

It matters not what way the Supreme Court may hereafter decide as to the abstract question whether slavery may or may not go into a Territory under the Constitution, 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 police 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 effectually prevent

13Ibid. III, 263; Lincoln's wording Ibid. III, 249.

14Beveridge, IV, 302: "This was the campaigners usual exaggeration. While Lincoln may have heard Douglas state his friendly legislation doctrine often, it is known positively that he heard it only twice and read it twice."

15Writings, III, 264.
the introduction of it into their midst. If, on the contrary, they are for it, their legislation will favor its extension. Hence, no matter what the decision of the Supreme Court may be on that abstract question, still the right of the people to make a slave Territory or a free Territory is perfect and complete under the Nebraska Bill. 16

This doctrine of "unfriendly legislation" was, in effect, a negation of the fundamental principle of Federal control, as it put the local police force in the place of the ultimate authority and decision of the Constitution and the Supreme Court. Lincoln, pressed for time by the limits of a half-hour, left his reply to Douglas' answer for the next debate which was held at Jonesboro, September 15, 1858. 17 There he stressed the dilemma in which Douglas had placed himself by his Freeport Doctrine. The Supreme Court of the United States had declared it unconstitutional for Congress to prohibit slavery in the territories. This conclusion was based upon the Constitutional provision that no person shall be deprived of property without due process of law. To this decision Judge Douglas expressed his adherence. But how could slavery be excluded from the territories unless in violation of that decision? In June 1856 Douglas, in answer to Senator Trumbull's question, whether or not the people of a territory had

16Ibid. III, 264. Beveridge, IV, 122-123: Justice McLean in a very uncompromising dissent on the Dred Scott case announced a similar municipal law doctrine: "What gives the master the right to control the will of his slave?" asked Justice McLean, and he answered, "The local law, which exists in some form."

17Lincoln's reply, Writings, III, 330-363, at Jonesboro.
the right to exclude slavery from their limits prior to the formation of a state constitution, said it was a matter for the Supreme Court to decide. Now he had shifted ground so as virtually to abandon recognition of that decision, charged Lincoln.\(^\text{18}\) He went on to show that "the proposition that slavery cannot enter a new country without police regulations is historically false."\(^\text{19}\) Besides, it would take not only law, but the active enforcement of the law to keep it out, as is illustrated in the case of Dred Scott himself in the Minnesota Territory. If one were to vote for unfriendly legislation in the territories "how long would it take the courts to hold your votes unconstitutional and void? Not a moment."\(^\text{20}\)

That Lincoln had been playing for Douglas' declaration from the beginning is seen in a letter to Henry Asbury on July 31, 1858 concerning Douglas' position:

He cares nothing for the South; he knows he is already dead there. He only leans Southward more to keep the Buchanan party from growing in Illinois. You shall have hard work to get him directly to the point whether a territorial legislature has or has not the power to exclude slavery. But if you succeed in bringing him to it--though he will be compelled to say it possesses no such power--he will instantly take ground that slavery cannot actually exist in the Territory unless the people desire it, and so give

\(^{18}\)Ibid. III, 352-353.
\(^{19}\)Ibid. III, 354.
\(^{20}\)Ibid. III, 356.
it protection by territorial legislation. If this offends the South, he will let it offend them, as at all events he means to hold on to his chances in Illinois.\textsuperscript{21}

Douglas was now explicitly committed. The reason for his bold assertion of the doctrine was that it would be popular with the Democrats of Illinois.\textsuperscript{22} Douglas had to get back to the Senate if he were to hope for the Presidency in 1860. If he were to drop out now all would be lost. If he were to lose to the Republicans in his home state there would be no chance for him later on the national scene. So at all costs, he bid for popular support and was content to face the struggle for the Presidency when it come time for that.

Douglas' reply to the third question seems to be hardly an answer at all. Lincoln had asked whether Douglas would submit if the Supreme Court of the United States shall decide that a state of the Union could not exclude slavery from its limits. In a way, it was an unfair question, and Douglas recognized it as such, for it set up a hypothetical condition which had almost no chance of fulfillment. The question involved an old controversy between the Washington Union, a paper which supported such a doctrine, and Douglas, who had denounced it in the Senate.\textsuperscript{23} Lincoln had brought

\textsuperscript{21}Marion Miller, \textit{Great Debates}, V, 162-163.

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid}. V, 163.

\textsuperscript{23}Milton, 345, 380. The \textit{Washington Union} was a newspaper which grew progressively more antagonistic to Douglas: Milton, pp. 309, 380.
up the same point at Ottawa, reading the text at length from Douglas' reply to the Washington Union. The Union had contended that slavery had a right to go into the free states, and state constitutions and laws to the contrary were null and void. Douglas said, support of such a position "would be an act of moral treason that no man on the bench of the Supreme Court could ever descend to." Douglas' handling of the question seems entirely fair, for he took the sting out of the query by refusing to accept it as a legitimate question.

"Are you in favor of acquiring additional territory, in disregard as to how such acquisition may affect the Union on the slavery question?" was Lincoln's fourth and final question. The Republicans wanted slavery prohibited in any new territory before it was acquired by the United States. Douglas demanded Lincoln's reply to the question, but as he would not answer when the Judge turned and questioned him, the Judge went on: "I answer that whenever it becomes necessary, in our growth and progress, to acquire more territory, that I am in favor of it, without reference to the question of slavery; and when we have acquired it, I will leave the people free to do as they please, either to make

24 *Writings*, III, 224-225.
26 Ibid. III, 268.
it slave or free territory, as they prefer."27

The Little Giant's pertinacity in holding what he considered a just principle is most admirable, though the foundations for it were unsound. His answer, he knew, would anger the extreme abolitionists who demanded exclusion of slavery from the beginning, and the radical pro-slavery men who, according to the principles, demanded recognition of the right of slavery to enter all new territories. Yet, Douglas was willing to take his position on the broad center ground between both extremes. For his own sake, it would have been even better to answer with greater circumspection, for though territorial expansion might make the United States ever greater, it might also be her ruin, by driving the various extreme factions against each other all the more. The key to Douglas' blunt answer might be that he was tired of all the word mincing engaged in since the opening of the campaign which made it painfully difficult to get a really straightforward, unconditional reply. He had constantly complained that Lincoln would not come out and commit himself on disputed points; he would now lead the way in plain talk.

Douglas then made his famous prediction of United States expansion which he supported whole-heartedly; "just as fast as our interests and our destiny require territory in the North, in the

27 Ibid.
South, or on the Islands of the ocean."28 "In less than fifteen years," the Little Giant declared, "if the same progress that has distinguished this country for the last fifteen years continues, every foot of vacant land between this and the Pacific Ocean, owned by the United States, will be occupied. Will you not continue to increase at the end of fifteen years as well as now? I tell you, increase, and multiply, and expand, is the law of this nation's existence."29 Douglas' vision was truly amazing, and his power to express that vision was matched only by the vitality of his beloved country in realizing it.

His exasperation with Lincoln's questions showed itself when he concluded his replies with: "I trust now that Mr. Lincoln will deem himself answered on his four points. He racked his brain so much in devising these four questions that he exhausted himself and had not strength enough to invent the others."30

The depths of Douglas' prejudice against the Negro came out strongly when he drew a word picture of Fred Douglass, a Republican Negro, sitting in a handsome carriage with a white lady while her daughter sat on the box-seat and her husband acted as driver.31 To shouts of "What of it?" and, "What have you to say against it?"

28 Ibid. III, 269-270.
29 Ibid. III, 269.
30 Ibid. III, 270.
31 Ibid. W. E. Burghardt DuBois, "Douglas, Frederick, "
Douglas retorted: "Those of you who believe that the negro is your equal and ought to be on an equality with you socially, politically, and legally, have a right to entertain those opinions, and of course will vote for Mr. Lincoln."32

Douglas had made no secret of how he felt about the Negro. Time and time again he said the black man was the white man's inferior by his very nature; he was the natural servant of the white man, and had no claim to rights against the superior race beyond those granted to him by the state; the government of the United States was founded by the white man, and the Negro had no natural claim to civic rights under it.33

Just the week before Douglas stated: "I do not regard the negro as my equal, and positively deny that he is my brother or any kin to me whatever. . . . He [Lincoln] holds that the negro was born his equal and yours, and that he was endowed with equality by the Almighty, and that no human law can deprive him of these rights, which were guaranteed to him by the Supreme Ruler of the Universe. Now I do not believe that the Almighty ever intended the negro to be the equal of the white man. If He did, He

DAB, (New York, 1943), V, 406-407; Douglass had a remarkable career; a fugitive slave in 1838, he bought his freedom in 1847. He entered the councils of the abolitionists and did much to advance their cause by lectures and writing.

32Writings, III, 271.

33At Chicago, III, 31-34; at Bloomington, III, 97-107; at Springfield, III, 139-146; at Ottawa, III, 197-202. Confer also Beveridge, IV, 144-145; Milton, 185.
has been a long time demonstrating the fact." 34

On these points Lincoln and Douglas were irreconcilable. On his part, Lincoln always defended the natural rights of the Negro to freedom and to the fruits of his own labors. 35 He agreed with Douglas that historically the government of the United States was made by white men, and that the white race in certain respects was superior to the black. However, the government was meant for the black man too. "But the corner-stone of the government, so to speak, was the declaration that 'all men are created equal,' and all entitled to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.' "36 He insisted on this point doggedly. 37 "I have always hated slavery, I think as much as any Abolitionist,—I have been an Old Line Whig,—I have always hated it; but I have always been quiet about it until this new era of the introduction of the Nebraska Bill began." 38 This was the ultimate ground on which the Lincoln-Douglas struggle was waged. Though Lincoln believed that

34 Ibid. II, 199.

35 Ibid. III, 209: "I agree with Judge Douglas he is not my equal in many respects,—certainly not in color, perhaps not in moral or intellectual endowment. But in the right to eat the bread, without the leave of anybody else, which his own hand earns, he is my equal, and the equal of Judge Douglas, and the equal of every living man.

36 Ibid. II, 254.

37 Ibid. II, 301-313; III, 62-63; III, 209.

38 Ibid. III, 50.
the Negro had fundamental rights equal to the white man, that did not mean that he believed him to be equal in all respects: "I protest, now and forever, against that counterfeit logic which presumes that because I did not want a negro woman for a slave, I do necessarily want her for a wife."39

In ways, Lincoln's position on the status of the Negro strikes us as harsh because it does not grant the Negro that perfect equality with the white man which today is held up as a Democratic ideal. Yet, considering the general tenor of his times, Lincoln was most just and truly the champion of Negro rights and liberties.

Most of the remainder of Douglas' speech was given over to a discussion of the Republican platform and the resolutions which he tried to pin on Lincoln at Ottawa.40 Though the resolutions which Douglas took to be the Republican platform passed at Springfield in 1854 were not actually passed there, nevertheless, he contended, they truly represented the Republican party line.41 He wanted to know whether or not Lincoln would stand by the resolutions as he should since he was the party's choice for Senator.

39Ibid. III, 60.
41Ibid. III, 272.
Douglas said Lincoln refused to answer his questions because he had been in error concerning the precise "spot" where the resolutions on which they were based were adopted. "Lincoln and his political friends are great on 'spots'". He thereupon recounted in his own way the story of the "Spot Resolutions," repeating the word spot to the point of exasperation.

Douglas presented the evidence on which he based his belief that the resolutions had been passed at Springfield in 1854, and he must have wearied his auditors with his long quotations from the resolutions of other Republican conventions held in the state, resolutions quite similar to those he had read at Ottawa, and of which, according to Douglas, Lincoln should have had full knowledge. He said, it was certain that the Republicans were committed to resist the admission of any more slave States, and to work for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave law. He warned that, "[w]hen I get into the next district I will show that the same platform was adopted there, and so on through the State, until I nail the responsibility of it upon the Black Republican party throughout the State." Once again the Judge made his ac-


cussion that Lincoln and Trumbull formed "a scheme to Abol-
itionize the two parties, and lead the old-line Whigs and old-line
Democrats captive, bound hand and foot, into the Abolition camp."45

Mr. Turner, a moderate Republican, at this juncture interposed
and said he had drawn up the resolutions Douglas had read and that
they were the creed of the Republican party in the State.46 So
then, declared Douglas, although it was in the platform of the
"Black Republican" party to resist the admission of any more
slave states, "Mr. Lincoln declares that he would not like to be
placed in a position where he would have to vote for them. All I
have to say to friend Lincoln is, that I do not think there is
much danger of his being placed in such an embarrassing position
as to be obliged to vote on the admission of any more slave States.
I propose, out of mere kindness, to relieve him from any such
necessity."47 Again he repeated his charge against Lincoln and
Trumbull of leading the old-line Whigs and Democrats into electing
a "Black Republican" legislature by playing the part of "decoy
ducks" to allure the others into the trap.48

Repetitious charges and insinuations give the impression that

46Ibid. III, 280.
47Ibid.
48Ibid. III, 281.
Douglas pressed to fill out the time. He turned again to the Republican platform, Trumbull's double-dealing with Lincoln over Senator Shields' seat, and the alleged attempt to silence Lincoln by offering him Douglas' place in the Senate.49

His references to "Black Republicans" brought forth a tremendous clamor of "White, white!" The Little Giant defied the mob, shouting: ". . . while Mr. Lincoln was speaking there was not a Democrat vulgar and blackguard enough to interrupt him. But I know that the shoe is pinching you. I am clinching Lincoln now, and you are scared to death for the result. I have seen this thing before. I have seen men make appointments for joint discussions, and the moment their man has been heard, try to interrupt and prevent a fair hearing of the other side. I have seen your mobs before, and defy your wrath."50 There followed great Democratic applause until Douglas asked his friends to be silent so that he could take advantage of his remaining time.

There is something almost humorous in the repeated contrasts of wrath and gentleness which characterized the Great Debate. It would be humorous save for the grim seriousness which underlay the entire campaign as the struggle over slavery pressed on toward civil war.

49 Ibid. III, 281-282.

50 Ibid. III, 282-283.
Douglas returned to the theme of the Republican platform, reading at length resolutions proposed by Mr. Lovejoy.\(^51\) Lincoln's supporters in the State Legislature, said Douglas, were pledged to support only such as would accept the Republican position as outlined by him time and again in the debate. Here stood the dilemma: either Lincoln was for the repeal of the Fugitive Slave law and for opposition to the admission of any more slave states, etc., or the Republican representatives in the Legislature were violating their pledges of honor to their constituents.\(^52\) Douglas demanded that Lincoln answer one way or the other.\(^53\) If Lincoln was not for the complete abrogation of the Fugitive Slave law, what then does he hold regarding the act, and the admission of more slave states?\(^54\) Douglas revealed what close attention he must have paid to Lincoln's speeches throughout the campaign for he manifested a remarkable facility in repeating the cautious manner in which Lincoln stated his position on many particular issues. He made the most of Lincoln's caution at every turn. Since Lincoln said he would be happy not to be put in a position to have to vote on the admission of new slave states,

\(^{51}\)Ibid. III, 283-284.

\(^{52}\)Ibid. III, 287.

\(^{53}\)Ibid.

\(^{54}\)Ibid. III, 287-288.
then, said Douglas, let us not embarrass him by putting him in such a position. For his own part, the Little Giant would not hesitate to admit a state with or without slavery according to the wish of the people of the state; that, after all, was the meaning of his great principle to which he had given so many years of his life, and which he would continue to defend to the bitter end.

Having attacked Lincoln in the usual way on his House Divided doctrine, and his refusal to commit himself definitely on the admission of any more slave states, Douglas rose for a moment to real rhetorical power and dignity in declaring:

I will retire in shame from the Senate of the United States when I am not willing to be put to the test in the performance of my duty. I have been put to severe tests. I have stood by my principles in fair weather and in foul, in the sunshine and in the rain. I have defended that same great principle of self-government here among you when Northern sentiment ran in a torrent against me, and I have defended that same great principle when Southern sentiment came down like an avalanche upon me. I was not afraid of any test they put to me. I knew I was right; I knew my principles were sound; I knew that the people would see in the end that I had done right, and I knew that the God of heaven would smile upon me if I was faithful in the performance of my duty.

The sincerity of Douglas is beyond question. For almost a decade now he had been fighting for the principle of popular

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55Ibid. III, 288.
56Ibid. III, 289-290.
57Ibid. III, 290-291.
sovereignty and for its application as he saw it. His part in the Compromise of 1850 attests this; his Nebraska Bill embodies it; his struggle with the Administration confirms it. No matter what may be said about the soundness of the principle itself, Douglas' sincerity and sense of duty is a glory to his name and to the Senate of the United States. The greatest tribute that can be paid to him is his own *apologia* at Freeport.

Douglas reverted to Lincoln's charge of a conspiracy on the part of the Senator, the Supreme Court, and two Presidents, to nationalize slavery. He again asserted that the preposterous charge was entirely unfounded. 58

The Senator's closing remarks betray his deep fears of Democratic party schism and of a growing state and federal opposition to him. Discussing the *Washington Union*, a paper he had attacked in the Senate, Douglas said it had been bought up by a swindling Black Republican, Cornelius Wendell, and was now supporting Lincoln for the Senate. 59 "This only proves what I have charged,—that there is an alliance between Lincoln and his supporters and the Federal office-holders of this State, and the Presidential aspirants out of it, to break me down at home." 60 Douglas last remark shows his fear of Lincoln: "I know Mr. Lincoln's object:

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he wants to divide the Democratic party, inorder that he may
defeat me and get to the Senate."61 Here Douglas' time expired,
and he stopped instantly.

At this point the truly significant portion of the debate
ended. Lincoln had asked his questions, and they had been answer-
ed by the Freeport Doctrine. In his rejoinder Lincoln did not
deal with the Senator's replies to his interrogatories, but rather
took up the fight over the resolutions passed by various con-
ventions in the state. The reason is most probably that Lincoln,
true to his usual manner of procedure, wanted time to consider
his attack on what Douglas had said on the four points he had put
to him, and then he might be ready to commit himself upon the
same points. Then too, as Lincoln noted,62 one half hour is not
much time in which to answer a speech of one and a half hours.

Douglas had done much to promote popular sovereignty, but he
was not its only spokesman, nor was his theory of sovereignty the
only one.63 In the Supreme Court itself there was the keenest
controversy on the issue. Chief Justice Taney's theory of sov-

61Ibid. III, 294.
62Ibid.
63"Squatter Sovereignty," Americana (New York, 1927), XXV, 464; Charles W. Smith, Roger B. Taney: Jacksonian Jurist, (Chapel
Hill, 1936), pp. 41-81, Ch. iii, "The Sovereign Will," Ch. iv,
"The Sovereign Power must not be Limited by Groups within the
State."
eignty was essentially that of Rousseau.\textsuperscript{64} Justice John McLean
asserted that slavery was supported only by physical sovereignty.
"He held that slavery had its origin merely in force and was con-
trary to right, being sustained only by local law."\textsuperscript{65} Yet, it
must be remembered that Douglas was the leading exponent of "pop-
ular sovereignty" as it was understood generally in his day.
That fact made him the central target of attack as we have already
seen, and it was to blight his future from Freeport to his pre-
mature death in 1861.

As to the resolutions the Senator had read in his speech, Lin-
coln proceeded to "talk reasonably and rationally" about them,
promising to resign if Douglas could get anyone who supported
him for Senator in 1855 to say anything inconsistent with what
he was about to say.\textsuperscript{66} In 1856, for the sake of opposition to
the party promoting the Nebraska policy of Douglas, various local
groups in Illinois joined together in a common platform, the
extremists yielding something for the sake of unity. It was this
unity in the ranks of the Republicans that Douglas feared: "I'll
tell you what he is afraid of. \textit{He is afraid we'll all pull to-}

\textsuperscript{64}Smith, \textit{Tam€y}, p. 42.

\textsuperscript{65}Reginald C. McCrane, "McLean, John," \textit{DAB} (New York, 1943),
XII, 128: Beveridge, IV, 122-123.

\textsuperscript{66}Writings, III, 295-296.
gather. this is what alarms him more than anything else."67

The consciousness of the necessity of party unity to win their cause is evidenced by Lincoln and Douglas in such a way as to show that both were working desperately to divide the forces of the other, and to keep their own ranks tightly closed; that was the only way to victory.

Lincoln did not state what that platform of 1856 was except in the most general terms, though he pledged himself to it. This must have annoyed the Senator very much. However, Lincoln, in answer to Douglas' demands for his position on the admission of new slave states should he have to vote on that issue, repeated his views of an earlier date and said, though it was unlikely that any new state would freely choose slavery, he did not see any way "to avoid voting for her admission" if the people did so choose.68

Once again Lincoln answered Douglas' objections to his holding such a position. He took up the Judge's answer to the Washington Union charge, quoting at length the same text from one of Douglas' speeches as he had done at Ottawa the week previous.69 Despite Douglas' full response to the Union matter, Lincoln pressed him again, saying that the Union was an organ of the Adminis-

67Ibid. III, 297.
68Ibid. III, 298.
tration and of Buchanan in particular; that since he denounced its policies for nationalizing slavery, even forcing it upon the already free states, he was opposing the Administration. That opposition was the Judge's position at a time when he was playing for Republican support, said Lincoln, but now he was crawling back into his old camp, and he will be found "eventually installed in full fellowship among those whom he was then battling, and with whom he now pretends to be at such fearful variance." 

When Lincoln's time expired with cries of "Go on, go on!", and amid great applause and cheers, Lincoln replied: "I cannot, gentlemen; my time has expired." 

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70 Ibid. III, 303.
71 Ibid. III, 305.
72 Ibid.
CHAPTER FIVE

"THE DEATH KNELL OF POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY"

Newspapers were split in their accounts of the Freeport Debate strictly along party lines. Lincoln was reported to have "THUMBED DOUGLAS ALL OVER STEPHENSON COUNTY" according to the Republican Press; for the Douglas papers Freeport was a "SECOND ROUT FOR LINCOLN." ¹

Though Lincoln knew that his questions would cost Douglas many votes in the South, and possibly defeat his hopes for the Presidency in 1860, ² still, Republican politicians felt badly about the outcome of the questions which they had cautioned against, while Democrats generally were pleased with Douglas' handling of the issues. ³ It is asserted by some that Lincoln deliberately sacrificed the senatorship by his questions in order to win the Presidency in the long run. ⁴ This seems scarcely credible, for it would not be reasonable to ascribe such sagacious foresight to Lincoln at a time when he was just beginning to achieve national recognition in the Republican ranks. It is unlikely too that

¹Beveridge, IV, 309-310.
³Beveridge, IV, 310.
Lincoln would be willing to sacrifice the high office of Senator, which was immediately within his grasp, to the vague hope of a higher office two years hence, for such is the uncertainty of politics that such a gamble would be most unattractive. Besides, he would have a far better chance to win the Presidency if he beat Douglas, than he would have by losing to him. Lincoln felt that Douglas stood to lose at least as much as he would gain by his reply.  

In the debates that followed Freeport a new point was made now and then, but for the most part the old arguments were repeated over and over. Great crowds, and ever greater enthusiasm, greeted the speakers. Douglas became increasingly exasperated with Lincoln's repetition of old charges that had been answered many times. When Lincoln complained that Douglas made the same speech everywhere, the Judge snapped: "I wish I could say the same of his speech . . . . he makes one speech north, and another south--because he has one set of sentiments for the Abolition counties and another set for the counties opposed to Abolitionism."  

When Douglas again took up the question of the equality of the Negro, he was forced to stop in the face of the uproar created

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5Barton, I, 393.
6Ibid. I, 396.
7Writings, IV, 140-141: in the Galesburgh debate, October 7th.
by his attempt to read the negro out of the Declaration of Independence. Lincoln had to rise and ask his friends to let the Judge go on. In his turn Lincoln again said that the basic issue of the campaign was the moral wrong of slavery and indifference to it. 8

Lincoln attacked Douglas' Freeport Doctrine in the third debate which was held at Jonesboro on September 15th. 10 "I maintain" said Lincoln, "that when he [Douglas] says, after the Supreme Court have decided the question, that the people may yet exclude slavery by any means whatever, he does virtually say that it is not a question for the Supreme Court. He shifts his ground." 11 He pressed this point home still further in declaring: "There can be nothing in the words 'support the Constitution,' if you may run counter to it by refusing support to any right established under the Constitution. And what I say here will hold still more force against the Judge's doctrine of 'unfriendly legislation.' How could you, having sworn to support the Constitution, and believing it guaranteed the right to hold slaves in the Territories, assist in legislation intended to defeat that right? That would be violating your own view of the Constitution." 12

8Ibid. IV, 141. Beveridge, IV, 319.
9Writings, IV, 168-169.
10Ibid. III, 350-357.
11Ibid. III, 353.
12Ibid. III, 355-356.
Lincoln kept up his barrage on Douglas' Freeport Doctrine through the remaining debates, ending his last speech of that contest with the challenge: "I defy any man to make an argument that will justify unfriendly legislation to deprive a slaveholder of his right to hold his slave in a Territory, that will not equally, in all its length, breath, and thickness, furnish an argument for nullifying the Fugitive Slave law. Why, there is not such an Abolitionist in the nation as Douglas, after all!" 13

The elections were held on November 2, 1859. Lincoln received 124,698 votes to Douglas' 121,130; but despite the popular victory, Lincoln was certain of defeat in the legislature because of the peculiar distribution of electoral votes. 14 On January 6, 1859, by a joint ballot of the legislature splitting on strict party lines, Lincoln received only forty one votes to Douglas' fifty four. 15

Lincoln had resumed his law practice at Springfield on November 6, 1858. 16

In his last speech of the campaign, Lincoln said: "To the best of my judgment I have labored for and not against the Union.

13Ibid. IV, 272; the end of the seventh and last joint debate at Alton, October 15, 1858.

14Logan, Great Conspiracy, p. 83.

15Beveridge, IV, 334-335.

16Paul M. Angle, Lincoln in the Year 1858 (Springfield, 1926), under date of November 6th.
As I have not felt, so I have not expressed any harsh sentiment towards our Southern brethren. I have constantly declared, as I really believed, the only difference between them and us, is the difference of circumstances." Nevertheless, the Democrats were fearful that Lincoln would be too willing to advocate abolition of the "peculiar institution" of the South which unfortunately had been handed on to them from earlier generations. Yet, the majority of the people of Illinois saw the wisdom of gradual abolition and supported it.

The campaign had been a strain on Lincoln financially, especially in that he had not been able to keep to his regular law practice during the campaign from June to November. Nevertheless, he showed his generosity by a contribution of over five hundred dollars to the campaign fund from his meager resources.

The Little Giant had a triumphant tour in celebration of his re-election to the Senate. He went down the Mississippi to St. Louis, Memphis, and New Orleans, speaking to tremendous crowds on his way; then on to New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, with speeches and magnificent welcomes everywhere he went. Despite disfavor on the part of the Administration, he was the most prominent man in his party. However, having reached the peak of his power, he faced sure prospects of a decline, for he had alienated

17Nevins, II, 185.
18Barton, I, 404-405.
19Logan, 84; Milton, 359-363.
the Republicans completely, thus ending any plan to make an alliance with them against the Administration, and in the eyes of the South he was as sectional as any Black Republican. His "great principle" became increasingly distrusted in the South, at the same time the Buchanan administration was washing its hands of him. The official reception in Washington was frigid. He learned that he had been succeeded as chairman of the Committee on Territories, a position in which he had fought and won many a battle, by James S. Green of Missouri. No reason was given for this change until Gwin of California said the next summer that Douglas' Freeport doctrine had required the action. Personal insults followed from the President and Senator Fitch of Indiana, the latter nearly ending in a duel.

In the autumn of 1859, Douglas and Lincoln engaged in the Ohio campaign, thus resuming their debate of the previous year. Lincoln's central attack was against Douglas' popular sovereignty. He spoke at Columbus on September 16th, and at Cincinnati on September 17th. At Cincinnati he caught Douglas on his embarrassing Freeport position. Recalling the Little Giant's doc-

20Beveridge, IV, 337.
21Ibid. IV, 337-338.
22Milton, 363.
23Ibid. 364-365.
24Writings, V, 32-73; V, 73-111.
trine of unfriendly legislation of the year before he said:
"He assumed that position at Freeport on the 27th of August, 1858. He said that the people of the Territories can exclude slavery, in so many words. You ought, however, to bear in mind that he has never said it since. You may hunt in every speech that he has since made, and he has never used that expression once."25 Douglas, Lincoln charged, had shifted his ground: "Douglas is not willing to stand by his first proposition that they can exclude it, because we have seen that that proposition amounts to nothing more nor less than the naked absurdity that you may lawfully drive out that which has a lawful right to remain."26 He had shifted to a modified "controlled as other property" policy on the slavery question.27 Douglas, however, never explicitly retracted his Freeport doctrine, and this was a point of attack by both Democrats and Republicans up to the elections of 1860.

Douglas' position robbed the negro of any claim to a share in the Declaration of Independence, and it reduced the slave, Lincoln said, to the status of a brute with respect to the white man.28 He urged: "Douglas's popular sovereignty, as a principle is this: If one man chooses to make a slave of another man, neither that

25 Ibid. V, 92.
26 Ibid. V, 93.
27 Ibid.
28 Ibid. V, 86-87.
man nor anybody else has a right to object. Apply this to government, as he seeks to apply it, and it is this; If, in a new Territory . . . they choose to either exclude slavery from their limits, or to establish it there, however one or the other may affect the persons to be enslaved, or the infinitely greater number . . . there is no power or right to interfere. That is Douglas’s popular sovereignty applied.”

Lincoln’s view of slavery was clear: “I think we want and must have a national policy in regard to the institution of slavery that acknowledges and deals with that institution as being wrong. Whoever desires the prevention of the spread of slavery and the nationalization of that institution yields all when he yields to any policy that either recognizes slavery as being right or as being an indifferent thing.” Yet, he did not advocate interference with slavery in the states where it already existed, nor the prevention of an effective fugitive slave law, because the Constitution required it. “But we must prevent the outspreading of the institution, because neither the Constitution nor the general welfare requires us to extend it.”

One month later, on October 16, 1859, John Brown seized the United States arsenal at Harper’s Ferry on the Potomac River in Virginia. His call for a general insurrection on the part of the

29Ibid. V, 99-100.
slaves ended in miserable failure and his execution. The event, however, had tremendous psychological repercussions both in the South and in the South. Brown's "invasion" of the South brought to fever pitch the slavery issue in the Senate. It was during this controversial turmoil that the ultras of both camps sprang upon Douglas, the Black Republicans assailing him for his denunciation of John Brown's abolitionist principles, and the Southerners attacking him for his popular sovereignty doctrine of non-intervention on the part of the Federal government to protect slavery.

The issues were clearly drawn between Douglas and Lincoln, and both men were now set for the Presidential campaign of 1860, which was now just a few months off. Lincoln gained increasing notoriety and power within the Republican ranks as the months passed, and his speech at Cooper Institute in New York on February 27th put him definitely in the running for the Republican Presidential nomination. The speech which was in the papers the next day, and later appeared in pamphlet form for a national audience, sought to show that the Founding Fathers had given the Federal government control over slavery in the territories. This thesis was asserted in contradiction to Douglas' theory of popular

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33 Milton, 409-412.
34 Barton, I, 408-409.
Referring to Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry, Lincoln denied any Republican connection with it, challenged the Democrats to prove otherwise, and summed up the incident saying: "John Brown's effort was peculiar . . . . In fact, it was so absurd that the slaves, with all their ignorance, saw plainly enough it could not succeed. That affair, in its philosophy, corresponds with the many attempts related in history at the assassination of kings and emperors. An enthusiast broods over the oppression of a people till he fancies himself commissioned by Heaven to liberate them. He ventures the attempt, which ends in little else than his own execution." Because of one man's work the South blamed the whole North, whereas the Republicans, said Lincoln, were willing to let slavery alone in the States where it already existed, but they would not let it spread into new territories.

After Cooper Union, Lincoln made eleven speeches in New England which were occasioned by a visit to his son Robert at Exeter.

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35*Writings*, V, 121-122.
36Ibid. V, 138-139.
37Ibid. V, 142.
39*Writings*, V, 149.
The tour did much for Lincoln, and much for the Republican party in that it was an occasion for voicing a conservative Republican policy to large and sympathetic audiences. All the while that Lincoln's following was growing, that of the Little Giant, his great adversary, was falling off with the splintering of the Democratic party into various faction.

The Freeport Doctrine stalked Douglas' steps until Jefferson Davis had him read out of the Democratic party by introducing resolutions in the Senate repudiating Douglas' doctrine of popular sovereignty. A caucus of Southern senators determined to block the Little Giant's way to the Presidency by introducing resolutions denouncing Douglas' doctrine in the words:

Resolved, That neither Congress, nor a territorial legislature, whether by direct legislation or legislation of an indirect and unfriendly nature, possesses the power to annul or impair the constitutional right of any citizen of the United States to take his slave property into the common Territories; but it is the duty of the Federal Government there to afford for that, as for other species of property, the needful protection; and if experience should at any time prove that the judiciary does not possess power to insure

40 Barton, I, 411-412.

adequate protection it will then become the duty of Congress to supply such deficiency.\textsuperscript{42}

There followed a debate on the resolutions which lasted from February 2nd to May 24th, about three weeks after the Democratic convention at Charleston. Davis spoke on May 7th, and Douglas answered him on the 13th and 16th in a long apologetic speech that betrayed the desperation of his position.

"The country has been informed," he said, "that I was removed from the post of chairman of the Committee on Territories, in 1858, because I uttered at Freeport, Illinois, the identical sentiments contained in the speeches and letters of acceptance of Mr. Buchanan and Mr. Breckinridge in 1856 . . . . Now, sir, there is a difference of opinion, it seems, on this question, between me and a majority of the Democratic Senators."\textsuperscript{43} However, Douglas maintained, it was the Senators who had deserted the party platform, and not he who stood by it as expressed by the Cincinnati convention of 1856.\textsuperscript{44}

He affirmed that the Democratic party itself was still behind him, for it had endorsed him as its presidential candidate at Charleston.\textsuperscript{45} So the Little Giant went on and on, by the hour, to defend himself and his great principle of popular sovereignty;

\textsuperscript{42} Miller, Great Debates, V, 219.

\textsuperscript{43} Ibid. V, 229.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{45} Ibid. V, 230-231.
but alas, to no avail, for on the 24th, Senator Davis' resolutions
were passed, with the fourth resolution sounding the death knell
of Douglas' Freeport Doctrine.\textsuperscript{46} Due to sickness, the Little
Giant was absent during the balloting.

Thus Dougals' triumphant career had met an insuperable ob-
stance on his way to the White House, and his Freeport Doctrine
had led to the breakup of the Democratic party at Charleston.\textsuperscript{47}
After the failure of the convention at Charleston, Douglas final-

\textsuperscript{46}Miller, V, 219. Douglas had written a long article for
Harper's Magazine in September, 1859 entitled "The Dividing Line
between Federal and Local Authority: Popular Sovereignty in the
Territories," Harper's Monthly, XIX, 519-537 in which he affirmed:
"The principle, under our political system, is that every
district political Community, loyal to the Constitution and the
Union, is entitled to all the rights, privileges, and immunities
of self-government in respect to their local concerns and intern-
al polity, subject only to the Constitution of the United
States."--p. 40 in the offprint at the Lincoln Library, Indiana
University; italics in the original. Douglas was trying to have
his cake and eat it. For further comment on the article confer
Rhodes, II, 373-374. The article was answered in a pamphlet by
Jeremiah S. Black, Attorney General in Buchanan's cabinet, "Ob-
servations on Senator Douglas' Views of Popular Sovereignty, ex-
pressed in Harper's Magazine for September 1858." Black said,
"Douglas and his followers on one hand and the rest of the Demo-
ocratic Party on the other."--Lincoln Lore, No. 778. This proved
all too true. The pamphlet provoked Douglas and pleased Buchanan;

\textsuperscript{47}Nevins, II, 227-228; Milton, p. 414: The North Carolina
committee took up a plank against popular sovereignty; the Douglas
men fought it--bolting followed. Hudson Strode, Jefferson Davis:
Southern delegates abided by Davis's insistence on Federal pro-
tection of all property in the territories. The Northern delegates
remained relentlessly committed to Douglas's hands-off --"squatter
sovereignty." On this single contention the Democratic party
split asunder. If Douglas had given in . . . he might have real-
ized his consuming ambition to be Chief Executive."
ly got the regular Democratic presidential nomination at Baltimore on June 23rd with 181 votes of the total 194 on the second ballot, but the battle was already lost.\textsuperscript{48}

A large group of bolting delegates, made up mostly of Buchanan office holders and Southern ultras, immediately formed their own convention and nominated John C. Breckinridge as their Presidential candidate. This was ratified by a second gathering of the seceders at Richmond a few days later.\textsuperscript{49} In the meanwhile, the old-line Whigs and Americans formed the Constitutional Union Party, and they nominated John Bell of Tennessee for President, and Edward Everett of Massachusetts for Vice-President.\textsuperscript{50} This group had really no platform other than a conservative hopefulness somewhere between the sentiments of the Republican Abolitionists and the Southern Democrats. The \textit{Springfield Republican} reported: "It might as well have taken the multiplication table and the decalogue for its platform as the Constitution and the Union."\textsuperscript{51} The splintering of the Democratic party ended its hopes for victory.

Six days after the Charleston convention closed, the Illinois Republican state convention was held at Decatur, May 9th. Its

\textsuperscript{48}Milton, 477.

\textsuperscript{49}Ibid.

\textsuperscript{50}Beveridge, IV, 345.

\textsuperscript{51}Ibid., IV, 345-346. For a brief outline of the four parties' platforms: Logan, 94-96.
delegates to the National Republican Convention were instructed to vote for Lincoln. Illinois Republicans backed "The Rail Splitter" with all the fervor of a revival. The convention opened on May 16th at Chicago in the Wigwam, a hall specially built for the occasion, and on the 18th the avalanche came with the third ballot bringing the nomination to Lincoln over Seward. Lincoln accepted the platform without reservation. Besides a homestead law, a protective tariff, government aid to the Pacific railroad, and other provisions, the platform included a denunciation of Lecompton, popular sovereignty, the slave trade, and disunionism. The eight plank in the platform read: "... we deny the authority of Congress, of a territorial legislature, or of any individuals, to give legal existence to slavery in any Territory of the United States." This was directly against Douglas' Freeport Doctrine. Nothing was said about the Fugitive Slave law, for an endorsement or a denunciation of it would have alienated some group or other of Republican supporters.

52 Beveridge, IV, 346.
53 Nevins, II, 244-245.
54 Shaw, Lincoln, I, 36; 43.
55 Beveridge, IV, 351.
56 Nevins, II, 252-254.
In the November elections, Lincoln won an electoral victory on a minority of the popular vote: he polled 1,866,452 votes; Douglas 1,376,957; Breckinridge 849,781; and Bell 588,879. Had they not been split, the Democrats would have won a sweeping victory. The vote went strictly according to sectional interest, the Republicans taking all the Northern States, with Oregon and California; the Democrats shared the Southern States.

Lincoln's policy of containment of slavery had defeated the popular sovereignty of Douglas' Freeport Doctrine. The election of 1860 was the final chapter in the Great Debate of 1858. Lincoln stood by his principle of non-extension of slavery. In a letter to E. B. Washburne of December 13, 1860, he wrote: "Prevent ... entertaining propositions for compromise of any sort on 'slavery extension' ... . On that point hold firm, as with a chain of steel." In his inaugural, Lincoln put his finger on the central grievance with the South: "One section of our country believes slavery is right, and ought to be extended, while the other be-

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58 Beveridge, IV, 351.
60 Ibid. II, 313.
61 Writings, V, 196.
lies it is wrong, and ought not to be extended. This is the only substantial dispute." Douglas' compromise failed because it had not the conviction of principle, but only the backing of "local police regulations."

Once the war commenced, the Little Giant joined wholeheartedly in support of Lincoln, the President, in order to preserve the Union. For a while he worked close to Lincoln, but in April he returned to Illinois where he fell ill and died on June 3, 1861. As the end neared, he told his wife, Adele, to instruct their sons "to obey the laws and support the Constitution of the United States."

Thus ended the career of Stephen A. Douglas, and the story of the Freeport Debate. Abraham Lincoln was left alone to carry on his crusade against slavery.

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62 *Writings*, V, 262-263.


The Freeport Debate was more than a passing incident in the political emergence of Lincoln. It was more than a campaign clash of two moral giants. It was a test of the political principles of the Republican party and of the Douglas Democrats, as well as an important turning point in the careers of both Lincoln and Douglas. Though Douglas won the campaign of 1858, his Freeport Doctrine contributed significantly to his downfall in 1860, thus leaving the field clear for Lincoln to win the Presidency, and ultimately to win the war against slavery.

Would Lincoln have been President without Freeport? Would Douglas have been able to hold the Democratic party together in 1860 had he not committed himself to the Freeport Doctrine? Such questions may excite enough speculation for another volume, for it would be impossible to answer them definitely. However, such speculations will not change the facts of history.
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The thesis submitted by Mr. Ernest S. Sweeney, S.J., has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

April 16, 1958
Date

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