

THIS WAS THE CIVIL WAR

Secession Move Gains Speed

By MERTON T. AKERS
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From where President-elect Lincoln sat in the governor's room of the Illinois State Capitol, the national picture was beginning to show signs of grimness this late November of 1860.

Portents were crowding in. They came by mail. They came with every visitor in the stream that wore down the bright Brussels rug in the room the governor had lent to Lincoln for an office. Everybody, it seemed, knew what was the matter with the country. And none rested until he had told Lincoln.

The nation appeared to be crumbling at the age of 84—mere infancy as history reckons time for a great country—and everybody knew what to do about it, everybody, that is, except the spare and sometimes mystic man who had to do something about it.

No Swell of War Spirit

No flippancy now from this untried Chief Executive-to-be. In an earlier day his fledgling hand, which eventually would write great English prose, had traced in a school-boy copybook, entirely innocent of punctuation, "Abraham Lincoln his hand and pen he will be good but God knows when."

Now could be the test, but Lincoln was not sure. Threats of secession were common enough. Nothing ever had come of them. Northern leaders, feeding information to Lincoln, were saying that even if a few states did leave the Union, they would soon be knocking at the door and asking to come back in like small boys who had run away from home in a pet.

Lincoln, who read public opinion as easily as a teenager reads comic books, detected no swell of war spirit in the North. Of course the abolitionists were talking tough but they never had counted for much. The only people who wanted to fight it appeared, were down South and that brand of fire eating

was pretty well discounted. All in all, it was hard to add up all this into a crisis.

But riffling through his mail and talking to people, Lincoln could read and hear darker news. The grim lines were beginning to show through.

Five States Act

Less than a month had passed since he had won the presidency, but he could count these clouds on the horizon, some no bigger than a man's hand, but clouds, nevertheless.

South Carolina—She would vote Dec. 6 for delegates to a convention to consider secession. No one doubted the outcome.

Mississippi—Gov. John J. Pettus called the legislature to meet Nov. 26, saying that the state must provide better safeguards for life and liberty than could be expected from "Black" Republicans.

The legislature promptly called an election to select delegates for a secession convention on Dec. 20.

Alabama—Set Dec. 24 to vote on delegates to a disunion convention Jan. 7.

Georgia—Set Jan. 2 for election of delegates to a convention which was to convene two weeks later.

Florida—Before November ended the Florida legislature had called a convention to vote on secession.

The wheels of secession were turning in five states. The evidence was there for anyone to read. Lawyer Lincoln read it and quietly began making up his mind how to meet the problem.

Attitude Summarized

His private secretary, John G. Nicolay, summed up his chief's current attitude on secession like this:

1. The existence of a national government implies the power and duty to maintain itself.
2. Right of secession is not debatable.
3. The President must execute the laws and maintain government. The government cannot entertain views of dis-solution.

4. If the people tire of the present government, they may change it in the manner prescribed by the Constitution.

Other indicators flew in the wind. Before Lincoln was a copy of a document written earlier by Lt. Gen. Winfield Scott, commander of the Army, and sent to President Buchanan. It was a two-part plan to meet any disunion crisis.

Scott's political plans were fantastic.

Military Plan Sound

But the military part was sound. The old general pointed out that there were nine Federal forts in the southern states, six unmanned and three with skeleton forces. Let them all be manned against surprise attacks, the general advised.

President Buchanan ignored all this.

Formally, Lincoln only acknowledged receipt of the plan. Privately, he told Rep. Elihu Washburne of Illinois to relay word to the general that after inauguration, "I wish him to be prepared . . . to make arrangements at once to hold the forts, or, if they have been taken, to take them back."

Lincoln's policy was taking shape.

Mail was pouring into Lincoln's office by the bushel. Half or more came from job seekers. Salted through the rest were warnings. One was typical. It came from a General Hubbard and had been written from Marion, Ala., to William H. Seward, New York senator, who apparently had forwarded it to Springfield. It read in part:

"I find myself in the midst of rebellion and revolution. The Cotton States are all on fire—enlisting minute men, I am told . . . that Mr. Buchanan had pledged himself that if any southern states wish to secede he will not oppose but would aid them . . . They swear that Mr. Lincoln shall never be Enaugurated—as sure as He comes to Washington he will be shot . . ."



SIGNS OF GRIMNESS—To President-elect Abraham Lincoln the national picture was showing signs of grimness in late November of 1860. Everyone seemed to know what was the matter with the country and none rested until he told Lincoln either in person or by mail. Lincoln detected no swell of war spirit

in the north, but he could count the dark clouds on the southern horizon. Lincoln, shown here with his son, Tad, on the porch of his home, stayed at Springfield after the election and kept a close eye on the public opinion.

(UPI Telephoto)

Please write to me by an early mail but do put on a postage stamp for if I were to (re)ceive a letter Franked by W. H. Seward I should be hung before night . . ."

Henry Wise, Jr., son of a former Virginia governor, to some one in West Philadelphia named Quicksall read: ". . . the secession movement will be consummated soon under Buchanan—recognized by him as legitimate—establishing the independence of the seceding members. Thus the question cannot arise under the Lincoln administration . . . He cannot find any just cause of war. . ."

Quotes From the News

BY UNITED PRESS INTERNATIONAL
Washington—House Speaker Sam Rayburn, in a telegram to President-elect Kennedy and his wife congratulating them on the birth of John F. Kennedy Jr.:
"I trust he will grow like his father and look like his mother."

London—A Buckingham Palace source, offering one reason why the royal family is opposed to letting Princess Margaret's commoner husband Antony Armstrong-Jones work in a competitive field such as photography:
"He'd have put the other society photographers out of business . . . the royal family naturally would not permit its glamour and prestige to be used in this way."

Washington—A U.S. Department of Justice official, explaining why slot machines continue to plague enforcement officials:
"There's so much easy money involved."

Havana—Premier Fidel Castro, referring to U. S. President-elect Kennedy in a nationwide TV broadcast:
"Let's see if we can educate Kennedy politically with our literacy campaign . . . perhaps it can contribute to opening Kennedy's understanding."



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