



FOCAL POINT ILLUSTRATED—The last hope of avoiding civil war—the Crittenden Compromise—died in 1861. It was before Congress only 28 days and it died in committee. Some of the points of the plan were extension of the Missouri Compromise line to the west coast, forbidding of Congress to abolish slavery inside a slave state, and guaranteeing slavery against constitutional change. This original drawing illustrates the focal point of the issues, the slave, and some of the points of the compromise. (UPI Telephoto)

Crittenden Compromise Fails

By MERTON T. AKERS
UPI Correspondent

The last and best hope of avoiding civil war—the Crittenden Compromise—died early in 1861 and its death was a strange one.

Men who would fight the Civil War on the battlefields and women who would fight no less bravely at home but without the panoply and excitement of war, scarcely knew that this bright hope of peace was crushed in the halls of cloakrooms of Congress by their representatives playing a deadly game about equally composed of idealism and politics.

The professionals—politicians, editors and pressure groups—recognized the opportunity and reacted according to their own lights, but the gravity of the moment never filtered down to the citizens of either side, preoccupied as they were with the ordinary business of living.

The compromise was before the nation only 28 days, including the Christmas and New Year holidays. In those days of slow communications public opinion had little time to form.

Was It Too Late?

With the death of the Crittenden Compromise went also the one chance for these men who would furnish the fodder for the greatest blood-letting in the nation's history to register a choice at the ballot box for or against a try at settling the North-South differences.

Whether the compromise would have averted the Civil War is debatable. Most historians have concluded it came too late.

Responsibility for killing the compromise rests on many shoulders. History has assigned some of it to Abraham Lincoln, President-elect who wrote Republican congressmen to "shun compromise." Another share goes to Jefferson Davis, Mississippi senator soon to head the new Confederacy. Davis and his southern colleagues in the Senate refused to approve the compromise unless the Republicans also approved it, resulting in a sort of circular trip to nowhere.

Amendments Offered

The compromise grew out of the Committee of 13, a Senate group.

The chairman was John J. Crittenden of Kentucky. He represented the in-between—the border states, which were split among themselves on the principle of slavery. His seat in the Senate once had been held by Henry Clay, the "great compromiser," but unfortunately, Crittenden had not inherited the stature and vision of his predecessor. He tried, certainly. For after he was named on Dec. 20, 1860—the day South Carolina se-

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them to public notice without a record vote.

Corwin promptly reported five propositions.

By the end of February resolutions were voted on with these results:

- 1.—A proposition calling for tighter enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Act. Adopted, 137 to 83.
- 2.—A proposition calling for a Constitutional amendment to prohibit insuring with slavery. Adopted, 123 to 83.
- 3.—A proposition for immediate admission of New Mexico to the Union, slavery to be decided by the inhabitants. Defeated, 115 to 83.
- 4.—A proposition granting fugitive slaves a trial by jury. Adopted, 92 to 85.
- 5.—A proposition to tighten extradition laws—a measure growing out of the John Brown raid. Defeated.

None of the resolutions had the force of law, merely expressing the sentiment of the House.

Another Plan Offered

One more peace effort remained. Early in January, 1861, Gov. John Letcher of Virginia, alarmed by the bitterness between North and South, proposed a national peace conference to be held in Washington with the Crittenden Compromise as a basis for discussion. Virginia was a border state torn between the factions and a sure bet to be a battleground if war came.

Twenty-one states were represented when the conference met Feb. 4, 1861, the same day southern delegates gathered in Montgomery, Ala., to form the Confederacy. The seven states which already had seceded and Arkansas stayed away. Wisconsin, Michigan and Minnesota declined to send delegates. California and Oregon were too far away to get the word in time.

The conference wore along through February in secret sessions. The fumbling Buchanan administration was running out when the resolutions of the conference were laid before the House and Senate. The findings followed the Crittenden plan and met the same fate. A Senate committee voted down the resolutions, 28 to 7. The House refused to consider them.

The conference remained in being until the March 4 inauguration of Lincoln.

Reunion Plans Are Made for Old Timers

Ashland—Reunion plans for the Old Timers Branch of the Southern Oregon college alumni association were drawn up at a meeting of college alumni and officials at the Medford home of Mrs. Anna Beeson Carter, historian.

Tentative dates for the reunion, which is held every two years on the SOC campus, were set for Aug. 11, 12, and 13 to coincide with the college summer sessions and the Oregon Shakespearean Festival.

Attending were Mrs. Alice French Willets, Old Timers secretary; Mrs. Carter, historian; Hugh G. Simpson, SOC director of alumni affairs; and Miss Dana Halaas of the college news bureau.

Other officers of the organization which is composed of all those attending the Old Normal School prior to its discontinuation by the legislature in 1910, are Worth Harvey, Eugene, president; and Dr. Herman Scullen, Corvallis, vice president.

Finletter Named NATO Ambassador

Washington—UPI—President Kennedy announced Saturday he will name former Air Force Secretary Thomas K. Finletter as U.S. Ambassador to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

Finletter, who was Air Force Secretary from 1950 to 1953, is a leader of the "reform" faction of the Democratic party in New York. He is an attorney and investment banker who, before heading the Air Force, was minister in charge of the Economic Cooperation Administration mission to the United Kingdom from 1948 to 1949.

ceded—to head this committee he contacted colleagues both North and South and came up with a plan which promptly was tagged the "Crittenden Compromise."

In essence, his plan provided for six amendments to the Constitution.

The first would have extended the Missouri Compromise line—that is the southern boundary of Missouri—to the West Coast; territories north of it to be free, slavery recognized south of it.

The second would have forbidden Congress to abolish slavery anywhere inside a slave state.

The third would have barred freeing of slaves in the District of Columbia unless the residents voted for it and compensation was paid.

The fourth would have exempted from federal interference the interstate movement of slaves.

The fifth would have provided indemnity to owners for runaway slaves rescued by abolitionists, counties where the rescues occurred to bear the cost.

The sixth would have guaranteed slavery as it then existed against constitutional change.

The compromise was voted down in committee, only the northern Democrats and the border state senators favoring it.

Crittenden Tries Again

Crittenden tried another way.

On Jan. 3, 1861, he introduced the compromise in the Senate, tacking to it a provision for submitting the plan to a nationwide referendum.

The showdown came Jan. 16. The vote to consider the compromise came on an innocuous substitute resolution. The vote was 25 to 23 for the substitute, killing the compromise. Six southern Democrats abstained from voting. The 25 votes for the substitute were all Republican.

During the roll call, Andrew Johnson of Tennessee, a Union man who later would be vice president and president, pleaded with Judah P. Benjamin of Louisiana to vote. "Let us save this proposition and see if we cannot bring the country to it," he beseeched Benjamin, but to no avail.

Benjamin and his five colleagues obviously wanted no compromise at this point. In a week Louisiana would secede.

House Try Fails

A parallel and even less successful compromise attempt ran simultaneously in the House. A Committee of 33, one member from each state, had been appointed early in December and wrangled for weeks without result.

Jan. 14, the committee had reached a stalemate. Finally the committee worked out from under responsibility by directing the chairman, Tom Corwin of Ohio, to report a set of resolutions to the House without recommendation, thereby bringing

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