

## Journal Divided – “Honest Abe”

Excerpt from Chapter 16 of Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (pgs 1717-1720)

### Link to full Chapter Sixteen

<http://www.knox.edu/documents/pdfs/LincolnStudies/Burlingame,%20Vol%201,%20Chap%2016.pdf>

### Page 2

At a New York ratification meeting, Horace Greeley introduced a resolution proclaiming that there were two irrepressible conflicts, one pitting freedom against “aggressive, all-grasping Slavery propagandism” and the other, “not less vital,” between “frugal government and honest administration” on the one hand and “wholesale executive corruption, and speculative jobbery” on the other.<sup>1</sup> Samuel Bowles of the Springfield, Massachusetts, *Republican* accurately prophesied that on “an issue likely to rival, if not to overshadow, that of the irrepressible negro – that of honesty, simplicity and economy in public affairs,” Lincoln would run well, for he “is a man of the most incorruptible integrity” whose forte is honesty. “‘Honest old Abe’ will mean something serious, as well as prove a taking campaign cry.” Because Lincoln had not been a prominent seeker of the office, he seemed unlikely to be indebted to “friends picked up on the line of a long life, and clamorous for more or less dirty work, and a great many enemies to punish.”<sup>2</sup> Along with several other newspapers, the Cincinnati *Commercial* lauded the candidate as a “straight-out and decided Republican” whose “administration of the government would be honest, economical and capable.”<sup>3</sup> William Cullen Bryant pledged that his New York *Evening Post* would “do all it could” to “turn out the present most corrupt of administrations, and install an honest administration in its stead.”<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> David E. Meerse, “Buchanan, Corruption, and the Election of 1860,” *Civil War History* 12 (1966): 124.

<sup>2</sup> Chicago correspondence by Samuel Bowles, 16 May, Springfield (Massachusetts) *Republican*, 19 May 1860; “Abraham Lincoln as a Candidate,” *ibid.*, 26 May 1860.

<sup>3</sup> “The Republican Nomination,” Cincinnati *Commercial*, 19 May 1860.

<sup>4</sup> Charles H. Brown, *William Cullen Bryant* (New York: Scribner, 1971), 418.