

Journal Divided – “That Presidential Grub”

Excerpt from Chapter 14 of Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (pgs 1523-1525)

Link to full Chapter Fourteen:

<http://www.knox.edu/documents/pdfs/LincolnStudies/Burlingame,%20Vol%201,%20Chap%2014.pdf>

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But it was not absurd, for the race for the nomination was wide open. Seward seemed to be the front runner, but many thought him as unelectable as Chase. Other names being tossed about – John McLean, Nathaniel P. Banks, Edward Bates, Lyman Trumbull, Jacob Collamer, Benjamin F. Wade, Henry Wilson – were all long shots at best. As Schuyler Colfax noted in December 1858, “there is no serious talk of any one.”¹

Despite his modesty, Lincoln between August 1859 and March 1860 positioned himself for a presidential run by giving speeches and corresponding with party leaders in several states, among them Iowa, Ohio, Wisconsin, New York, Connecticut, Rhode Island, New Hampshire, and Kansas.² At the same time, he labored to keep Republicans true to their principles by having them steer a middle course between the Scylla of Douglas’s popular sovereignty and the Charybdis of radical abolitionism. Only thus could he and his party capture the White House.³ And only thus could a lesser-known Moderate like himself lead the ticket.

¹ Colfax to Charles M. Heaton, Sr., Washington, 20 December 1858, Colfax Papers, Northern Indiana Center for History, South Bend.

² William Eldon Baringer, “Campaign Technique in Illinois – 1860,” *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society* 32 (1932): 209.

³ Don E. Fehrenbacher, *Prelude to Greatness: Lincoln in the 1850’s* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962), 141-61.