

Journal Divided – “Make No Contracts”

Excerpt from Chapter 15 of Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (pgs 1680-1684)

Link to full Chapter Fifteen

<http://www.knox.edu/documents/pdfs/LincolnStudies/Burlingame,%20Vol%201,%20Chap%2015.pdf>

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That night, while the Sewardites consumed 300 bottles of champagne in anticipation of their imminent triumph, Davis and his cohorts barely slept. Henry S. Lane was observed lobbying furiously for Lincoln, especially among the Vermont and Virginia delegations. Lane, Caleb B. Smith, and George K. Steele were “indefatigable, untiring, and persistent in urging the claims of ‘old Abe,’ and large numbers of delegates from other States are known to have been influenced by them,” a Hoosier reported.¹ They succeeded in creating “the fatal break in Seward’s strength,” demolishing “his power in the New England and the slave State delegations.” Lane “asserted hundreds of times that the nomination of Seward would be death to him, and that he might in that case just as well give up the canvass. He did not feel like expending his time and money in carrying on a hopeless campaign, and would be disposed to abandon the contest.”² George W. Lawrence of Maine, who boarded at the hotel where the Pennsylvanians were staying, “was incessant in his effort to procure their votes” for Lincoln.³ Davis wanted to cut a deal with the Pennsylvanians, but the previous day Lincoln had sent a terse message via Edward L. Baker: “Make no contracts that will bind me.”⁴

¹ Chicago correspondence by J. L. K., 18 May, Madison, Indiana, *Daily Courier*, 21 May 1860.

² Murat Halstead, “A Historic Day,” *Los Angeles Times*, 5 June 1892; Murat Halstead’s report in the Cincinnati *Commercial*, 21 May 1860; Chicago correspondence, n.d., Philadelphia *Press*, n.d., copied in the New York *Herald*, 16 May 1860.

³ David Davis and Leonard Swett to Lincoln, Danville, Illinois, 22 November 1860, State Department Records, Letters of Application and Recommendation During the Administrations of Abraham Lincoln and Andrew Johnson, 1861-1869, file for George W. Lawrence, Record Group 59, M 650, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

⁴ Wilson and Davis, eds., *Herndon’s Lincoln*, 278; E. L. Baker, interview with Herndon, [1865-66], Wilson and Davis, eds., *Herndon’s Informants*, 435; “Mr. Lincoln’s Commitals,” *Chicago Press and Tribune*, 28 May 1860.