

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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Whitney’s account of the Cameron bargain has been challenged, but it seems plausible in light of abundant reminiscent testimony.¹ Swett described to a convention delegate “his labors with Cameron,” the “promises he made Pennsylvania on behalf of Mr. Lincoln,” and “the subsequent difficulty he encountered in persuading Mr. Lincoln to carry out the contracts, or ‘bargains,’ as Mr. Lincoln called them.”² Swett acknowledged that he had promised to have Cameron appointed to the cabinet if Pennsylvania supported Lincoln on the second ballot.³ In 1875, Cameron confided to an interviewer: “Lincoln told me that he was more indebted to Judd than any other one man for his nomination, but I told him I thought Davis and Swett did more for him. They bought all my men – Casey and Sanderson and the rest of them. I was for Seward[.] I knew I couldn’t be nominated but I wanted a complimentary vote from my own State. But Davis and the rest of them stole all my men. Seward accused me of having cheated him.”⁴

¹ David Herbert Donald rejected Whitney’s version. Donald, *Lincoln* (New York: Simon Schuster, 1995), 638. Allan Nevins and many other historians accepted it. Nevins, *Emergence of Lincoln*, 2:256.

² Reminiscences of Richard S. Tuthill in an obituary of Leonard Swett, *Chicago Times*, 9 June 1889. Tuthill was a delegate to the 1880 Republican National Convention from Illinois, served as the U. S. District Attorney for the Northern District of Illinois, 1884-86, and was a judge on the Cook County Circuit Court.

³ Washington correspondence by Frank G. Carpenter, 22 January, *Cleveland Leader*, 23 January 1885; “Presidents’ Cabinets,” undated clipping [probably February 1893] of an article by Frank G. Carpenter from the *Washington Evening Star*, scrapbook, Frank G. Carpenter Papers, Library of Congress. Swett’s law partner, Peter S. Grosscup, was Carpenter’s informant.

⁴ Cameron, interview with Nicolay, Washington, 20 February 1875, Burlingame, ed., *Oral History of Lincoln*, 43. Cameron told Seward in the immediate aftermath of his defeat at Chicago: “I am pained at your defeat, and mortified that my state should have contributed to it.” Five months later, he declared to the *New Yorker*: “My whole ambition is to see you in the Presidency.” Cameron to Seward, Washington, 20 May 1860, and Lochliel, Pennsylvania, 13 November 1860, Seward Papers, University of Rochester. Lincoln’s estimate of his debt to Judd was shared by Francis P. Blair, Sr. Blair to Mrs. Norman B. Judd, Silver Spring, Maryland, 20 January 1861, Lincoln Collection, Brown University.