



Journal Divided – “Lincoln and Know Nothings”

Excerpt from Chapter 16 of Michael Burlingame’s *Abraham Lincoln: A Life* (pgs 1784-1789)

Link to full Chapter Sixteen

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

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Since the term “Republican” was poison in Maryland, Davis said he would support Bell there but hinted that he might be willing to stump for Lincoln in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. He thought “the Chicago nomination a wise one,” for the candidate was “long headed.” Davis’s only fear was that Seward would be named secretary of state and act as “a weight on the administration.”¹ Though he disliked Bell’s pro-slavery public letter, he believed a Bell administration “would be the same as Lincoln[’]s or Mr. [Henry] Clay[’]s.”² Lincoln urged Richard W. Thompson, his friend from their days together in Congress and a leader of Indiana’s Constitutional Union party, to “converse freely” with Davis.³ Thompson did so. He also told Lincoln while he himself might not vote Republican, he would work to block a Bell ticket in Indiana.⁴ (In 1856, Thompson had badly damaged Republicans’ chances in the Hoosier state by thwarting their attempts to fuse with the Americans; in return he received a rich reward from the Democrats.)⁵

¹ Henry Winter Davis to David Davis, [Baltimore, June 1860], David Davis Papers, Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield; Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis Du Pont, n.p., 24 August 1860, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

² Henry Winter Davis to Samuel Francis Du Pont, West Point, 15 August 1860, S. F. Du Pont Papers, Hagley Museum, Wilmington, Delaware.

³ Lincoln to Richard W. Thompson, Springfield, 18 June 1860, Basler, ed., *Collected Works of Lincoln*, 4:79.

⁴ Blanton Duncan to Stephen A. Douglas, Louisville, 3 December 1860, Douglas Papers, University of Chicago.

⁵ Acting as a lawyer for the Menominee tribe of Wisconsin, Thompson had submitted a dubious claim which had been rejected. After Thompson blocked any alliance between the Americans and the Republicans in 1856, Congressional Democrats allowed the claim, which included an \$80,000 commission for Thompson. Summers, *Plundering Generation*, 155-57, 241. See also Charles Roll, *Colonel Dick Thompson: The Persistent Whig* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1948), 150-54.