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LINCOLN AND THE MISSOURI COMMITTEE OF SEVENTY.

(Statement of Mr. Enos Clarke, of St. Louis, Mo., to J. McCan Davis, December 2, 1898. Mr. Clarke was a member of the Committee of Seventy.)

A convention held at Jefferson City on the first of September¹⁸⁶³ created a committee or delegation of seventy to go to Washington and present to the President the grievances of the Radical Union men of Missouri concerning the military administration of Gen. Schofield. The delegation went to Washington late in September receiving ovations at most of the cities through which it passed, for at that time there had been created a very large interest throughout the country in the action of this division of the Union party in the state of Missouri. We arrived at Washington the latter part of the week and it was not until the following Wednesday that we could arrange for a conference with the President. In the meantime the delegation met and prepared a statement of their grievances, which was put in printed form and subsequently submitted to the President. The conference was held in the great East room of the White House. It commenced at 9 o'clock in the morning and lasted until noon. The President was accompanied by one of his secretaries. ~~THE PRESIDENT~~ Mr. Charles D. Drake, chairman of the delegation, arose and presented the formal statement of grievances to the President. ^{page 100} The President listened with patient attention. At the conclusion of the reading, Mr. Lincoln replied at length. I shall never forget the intense chagrin and disappointment we all felt at the treatment of the matter in the beginning of his

reply. He seemed to belittle and minimize the importance of our grievances, and to give magnitude to artificial and unimportant matters. He gave us the impression of a Western pettifogger before a justice of the peace jury. But as he talked on, and made searching inquiries of members of the delegation, and invited debate, it became manifest that his manner at the beginning was really the foil of a master, to develop the weakness of the presentation. Before the conclusion of the conference he addressed himself to the whole matter in an elevated, dignified, exhaustive and impressive way.

There was no report made of this conference, but there are some things I remember. I remember that Mr. Lincoln made this statement: "You gentlemen must bear in mind that in performing the duties of the office I hold I must represent no one section of the Union, but I must act for all sections of the Union in trying to maintain the supremacy of the government." And he also said this: "I desire to so conduct the affairs of this administration that if, at the end, when I come to lay down the reins of power, I have lost every ~~supporter and~~ other supporter and friend, I shall at least have one friend left, and that friend shall be down inside of me." These were characteristic expressions.

Toward the conclusion of the conference, and after the whole matter had been exhaustively discussed both by the President and the petitioners, Mr. Drake stepped forward and said: "Mr. President, the time has now come when we can no longer trespass upon your attention, but must take leave of you"; and in those deep, impressive, stentorian tones peculiar to Mr. Drake, he added: "Many of these men who stand before

you today return to inhospitable homes, where Rebel sentiments prevail, and many of them, sir, in returning there do so at the risk of their lives; and if any of those lives are lost by virtue of the military administration of that department, ~~under your administration~~ let me tell you, sir, that the blood will be upon your garments and not upon ours."

During this impressive address the President stood before the delegation with tears streaming down his cheeks, seeming deeply agitated.

The members of the delegation were then presented individually to the President and took leave of him. I shall always remember my last sight of Mr. Lincoln as we left the room. Mr. Charles Johnson and myself were walking together, and as we passed out of the room we looked back. Meantime Mr. Lincoln had met some personal acquaintance with whom he had exchanged pleasantries, and, ~~he~~ instead of the tears of a few moments before, he was indulging in hearty laughter. This rapid and wonderful transition from one extreme to the other impressed me greatly.

The conference concluded in a free, easy and natural intercourse, and Mr. Lincoln appeared to exhibit a generous confidence in and sympathy with the people who represented what was termed the "pestilent faction" in Missouri.

Great importance was attached to the movement of this radical party in the West. The delegation was received with favor by a number of public officials in Washington, being given a reception by S. A. M. Chase, Secretary of the Treasury. Afterwards we were invited to New York and attended a reception at Cooper Institute.
