There is not in the history of state political conventions one of more dramatic interest than that at which on May 29, 1856, the Republican Party was born in Illinois. Other states were earlier in organizing a branch of the new party devoted to preventing the extension of slavery, but in no state had there been more earnest agitation, in none was there a more determined set of men ready for resistance when the moment came. These men were the hard-headed, honest-hearted, great-souled members of all existing parties. These were abolitionists like Owen Lovejoy, Democrats like John M. Palmer, Whigs like David Davis. In their own counties they had openly declared that they would bolt their respective parties rather than accept the Nebraska bill letting slavery into free soil, and when a few of their number called a convention on May 29, 1856, at Bloomington, Ill., for the express purpose of organizing a new party they went there in a body ready for action.

The events of the days just before the convention had steeled the weakest of them. Kansas was in the hands of a pro-slavery mob, her governor a prisoner, her capitol in ruins, her voters intimidated. The newspapers they were reading daily were filled with accounts of the attack on Sumner in the Senate by Brooks. One of the very men whom they had expected to be a leader in their convention was lying at home prostrated by a cowardly blow from a political opponent. Little wonder then that they came resolved and impregnable upon actions which would stay the flood of evil and of disorganization which they saw threatening the land. The convention was opened with Senator J. M. Palmer in its chair. Its work of organizing and nominating was carried through but the members felt the need of

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

some powerful amalgamating force which would wield into one their discordant elements. In spite of their best intention ~~xxxxxxxx~~ their most manly efforts they knew in their hearts that the conventions were still make up of political enemies, that the whig was still whig, the Democrat Democrat, the Abolitionist Abolitionist. Man after man was called to the platform to speak and many noble speeches were made but none yet had touched their hearts and converted them to pure Republicanism. Then suddenly there was a call raised of a name not on the program - "Lincoln" - "Lincoln" - "give us Lincoln." The crowd took it up and made the hall ring until a tall figure rose in the back of the audience and slowly strode down the aisle, an indulgent smile on his lips. As he turned to his audience there came gradually a great change upon his face. "There was an expression of intense emotion," says one of his hearers, who is still living. "It was the emotion of a great soul. Even in stature he seemed greater. He seemed to realize it was a crisis in his life." Lincoln's extraordinary human insight and sympathy told him as he looked at his audience that what this body of splendid earnest but groping men needed was to be made to feel that they had undertaken a cause of such transcendent value that beside it all previous alliances, ambitions and duties were as nothing. If he could make them feel the trivality of their differences as compared with the tremendious principle of the new party he was certain they would go forth Republicans in spirit as well as in name.

He began his speech then deeply moved and with a profound sense of the importance of the moment. At first he spoke slowly, haltingly but gradually he grew in force and intensity until his hearers thrilled and unconscious rose from their chairs

Digital Image, 2011. The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

and with pale faces and quivering lips pressed towards him. Starting from the back of the broad platform in which he stood his hands on his hips he slowly advanced towards the front, his eyes blazing, his face white with passion, his voice resonant with the force of his conviction. As he advanced he seemed to his audience fairly to grow, and when at the end of a period he stood at the front line of the stage hands still ~~xxxxxx~~ on the hips, head back, raised ~~xx~~ on his tip toes, he seemed like a giant inspired. "At that moment he was the handsomest man I ever saw," says one of his hearers.

So powerful was his ~~xffxxt~~ effect on his audience that men and women wept as they cheered and that children there that might still remember the scene though at the time they understood nothing of its meaning. As he went on ~~xxxx~~ there came upon the convention the very emotion he sought to arouse. "Every one in that before incongruous assembly came to feel as one man, to think as one man and to purpose and resolve as one men." He had made every man of them pure Republican. He did something more. The indignation which the outrage in Kansas and throughout the country had aroused was uncontrolled. Men talked passionately of war. It was at this meeting that Lincoln while he fired his hearers by an expression which became a watchword of the campaign: "We won't go out of the Union and you shant", poured out on the wrath of the Illinois opponents of the Nebraska bill by advising "ballots not bullets."

Nothing illustrates better the extraordinary power of Lincoln at Bloomington than the way he so stirred up the newspaper reporters. It was before the stenographers had become acclimated in Illinois, though long-hand reports were regularly taken. Of

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

course all the leading papers of the State leaning towards the new party had reporters at the Convention. Among these was Mr. Joseph Medill, now Editor of the Chicago Tribune and even then now 40 years ago its representative. "It was my journalistic duty," says Mr. Medill, "though a delegate to the convention, to make a 'long-hand' report of the speeches delivered for The Chicago Tribune. I did make a few paragraphs of report of what Lincoln said in the first 8 or 10 minutes, but I became so absorbed in his magnetic oratory that I forgot myself and ceased to take notes; and joined with the convention in cheering and stamping and clapping to the end of his speech.

"I well remember that after Lincoln had sat down and calm had succeeded the tempest, I waked ✗ out of a sort of hypnotic trance, and then thought of my report for The Tribune. There was nothing written but an abbreviated introduction.

"It was some sort of satisfaction to find that I had not been 'scooped', as all the newspaper men present had been equally carried away by the excitement caused by the wonderful oration and had made no report or sketch of the speech."

A number of Lincoln's friends, young lawyers, most of them, were accustomed to taking notes of speeches and as usual sharpened their pencils as he began. "I attempted for ✗ about 15 minutes," says Mr. Herndon, Lincoln's law partner, "as was usual with me then to take notes, but at the end of that time I threw pen and paper away and lived only in the inspiration of the hour." The result of this excitement was that when the convention was over there was no one of the reporters present who had anything for his newspaper. They all went home and wrote burning editorials about the speech and its great principle but as

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

to reproducing it they ~~would~~ could not. Men came to talk of it all over Illinois. They realized that it had been a purifying fire for the party but as to what it contained no one could say. Gradually it became known as Lincoln's "lost speech." But its reputation grew greater as time went on, even Lincoln was accustomed to saying that it was his greatest speech unless indeed the one at Leavenworth might be called greater.

But through the convention so nearly to a man lost its head, there was at least one auditor who had enough control to pursue his usual habit of making notes of the speeches he heard. This was a young lawyer on the same circuit as Lincoln, Mr. H. C. Whitney. For some three weeks before the convention Lincoln and Whitney had been attending court at Danville. They had discussed the political situation in the state carefully and to Whitney Lincoln had stated his convictions and determinations. In a way he had absorbed Lincoln's speech before hand as indeed any one must have done who was with Lincoln when he was preparing an address it being his habit to discuss points and to repeat them aloud indifferent to who heard him. Whitney had gone to the convention intending to make notes knowing as he did that Lincoln had not written out what he was going to say. Fortunately he had a cool enough head to keep to his purposes.. He made his notes and on returning to Judge Davis' house in Bloomington where he with Lincoln and one or two others were staying he enlarged them while the others ~~at~~ discussed the speech. These notes Whitney kept for many years, always intending to write them out but never attending to it until last year <u>Mc Clure's Magazine</u> ~~as~~ learned that he had them and urged him to write out the report. This Mr. Whitney did and the speech will soon be published in the series of Lincoln

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

articles now appearing in McClure's. Mr. Whitney does not claim that he has made a perfect report. He does claim that the argument is correct and that in many cases the expressions are exact. Mr. Joseph Medill who has examined the speech says of it:

"I have carefully and reflectively read it, and taking into account that Mr. Whitney did not take down the speech stenographically, but only took notes and afterwards wrote them out in full, he has reproduced with remarkable accuracy what Mr. Lincoln said, largely in his identical language and partly in synonymous terms. The report is close enough in thought and word to recall the wonderful speech delivered forty years ago with vivid freshness."

Judge J. A. Cunningham of Urbana, Ill., who also heard the speech says of the Whitney report:

"I had so much curiosity to see what it was that I delayed not until I had gone through the whole document. I heard the speech and was very much impressed and aroused by it. At the distance of nearly forty years I recognise very much in the utterances, manner and spirit of the speech, especially in the moderation which he counseled. The expression, 'ballots not bullets,' was like oil on the troubled waters."

A full quotation will show any one familiar with Lincoln's speeches that Mr. Whitney has caught much of their style, for instance these:

"While we affirm and reaffirm if necessary, our devotion to the principles of the Declaration of Independence, let our

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library

practical work here be limited to the above, and our weapons must be ballots and not bullets - or at least, must not be, till nothing else will do: and we must be firm and united in our purpose."

"We must first consider what we have the power to do: we must not make promises we cannot perform: we must not raise hopes we cannot carry out: we must be calm and moderate, and, like prudent men, consider the whole difficulty and see what is possible and just. We must not be led by excitement and passion to do that which our judgements would not approve when in our cooler moments. We have higher aims: We have more serious business than temporary measures. We are here to stand firmly for a principle -- to stand firmly for a right. We know that great wrongs are done, and we denounce these wrongs and outrages, altho', at present, we can do not much more than that ; but we desire to reach out beyond those personal ~~wwx~~ outrages and prevent any further wrongs in the future."

"The battle of Freedom is one to be fought out on principle. Slavery is a violation of the eternal right. We have temporised with it from the necessities of our condition, but as sure as justice rules and children read, that <u>black foul ~~wwx~~ lie can never be consecrated into God's Hallowed truth</u>."

"The repeal of the sacred Missouri Compromise has installed the weapons of violence - the bludgeon - the burning torch -

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.

the bristling cannon; - the weapons of Kingcroft, of the inquisition, of ignorance, of barbarism - of oppression. We see its fruits in the dying bed of the fearless Sumner - in the ruins of the "Free State" hotel - in the smoking timber of the "Herald of Freedom" - in the "Free State" Governor of Kansas, chained to a stake on Freedoms soil like a horse thief, for the crime of a desire for Freedom. (Applause.) "

Digital Image, 2011, The Ida M. Tarbell Collection, 1890-1944, Allegheny College Pelletier Library.