

SPEECH OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN AT NORWICH,

MARCH 10, 1860.

The meeting at the Town Hall Friday evening was a perfect jam. The Hall was filled to its utmost capacity, and hundreds went away from the doors disappointed at being unable to gain an entrance. A delegation of a hundred or more came down from Danielsenville to hear Mr. Lincoln speak. They were received upon their entrance into the Hall with enthusiastic demonstrations of applause.

In the absence of Mr. Starkweather, President of the Buckingham Campaign Club, who was kept at home by sickness, Hon. Joseph G. Lamb, First Vice President, presided.

Mr. Lincoln was received upon his entrance into the Hall with storms of applause, loud and prolonged; and when he was introduced by Mr. Lamb, the enthusiasm of the audience knew no bounds. Cheer after cheer went up for the noble champion of Republican principles, and some minutes elapsed before the applause subsided sufficiently to allow him to commence his address.

When quiet had been restored, Mr. Lincoln commenced his speech, which lasted nearly two hours, during which he was listened to with unflagging attention.

We are unable to give more than a few brief extracts from the speech, which should be heard entire to be fully appreciated. Speaking of the pre-eminent importance of the Slavery question, he said, For, whether we will or not, the question of Slavery is the question, the all absorbing topic of the day. It is true that all of us- and by that I mean, not the Republican party alone, but the whole American people, here and elsewhere- all of us wish this question settled- wish it out of the way. It stands in the way, and prevents the adjustment, and the giving of necessary attention to the other questions of national house-keeping. The people of the whole nation agree that this question ought to be settled, and yet it is not settled. And the reason is that they are not yet agreed how it shall be settled. Again and again it has been fondly hoped that it was settled, but every time it breaks out afresh, and more violently than ever. It was settled, our fathers hoped, by the Missouri Compromise, but it did not stay settled. Then the compromises of 1850 were declared to be a full and final settlement of the question.

The two great parties, each in National Convention, adopted resolutions declaring that the settlement made by the Compromise of 1850 was a finality—that it would last forever. Yet how long before it was unsettled again! It broke out again in 1854, and blazed higher and raged more furiously than ever before, and the agitation has not rested since.

These repeated settlements must have some faults about them. There must be some inadequacy in their very nature to the purpose for which they were designed. We can only speculate as to where that fault—that inadequacy, is, but we may perhaps profit by past experience. I think that one of the causes of these repeated failures is that our best and greatest men have greatly underestimated the size of this question. They have constantly brought forward small cures for great sores— plasters too small to cover the wound. This is one reason that all settlements have proved so temporary— so evanescent. (Applause)

Look at the magnitude of this subject ! About one sixth of the whole population of the United States are slaves ! The owners of the slaves considered them property. The effect upon the minds of the owners is that of property, and nothing else— it induces them to

insist upon all that will favorably affect its value as property, to demand laws and institutions and a public policy that shall increase and secure its value, and make it durable, lasting and universal. The effect on the minds of the owners is to persuade them that there is no wrong in it. But here in Connecticut and at the North, Slavery does not exist, and we see through no such medium. To us it appears natural to think that slaves are human beings; men, not property; that some of the things, at least, stated about men in the Declaration of Independence apply to them as well as to us. (Applause,) We think Slavery a great moral wrong, and while we do not claim the right to touch it where it exists, we wish to treat it as a wrong in the Territories, where our votes will reach it.

Now these two ideas, the property idea that Slavery is right, and the idea that it is wrong, come in collision, and do actually produce that irrepressible conflict which Mr. Seward has been so roundly abused for mentioning. The two ideas conflict, and must conflict.

There are but two policies in regard to Slavery that can be at all maintained. The first, based on the property view that Slavery is right, conforms to that idea throughout,

and demands that we shall do everything for it that we ought to do if it were right. The other policy is one that squares with the idea that Slavery is wrong, and it consists in doing everything that we ought to do if it is wrong. I don't mean that we ought to attack it where it exists. To me it seems that if we were to form a government anew, in view of the actual presence of Slavery we should find it necessary to frame just such a government as our fathers did; giving to the slaveholder the entire control where the system was established, while we possessed the power to restrain it from going outside those limits. (Applause)

Now I have spoken of a policy based on the idea that Slavery is wrong, and a policy based upon the idea that it is right. But an effort has been made for a policy that shall treat it as neither right nor wrong. Its central idea is indifference. It holds that it makes no more difference to us whether the Territories become free or slave States, than whether my neighbor stocks his farm with horned cattle or puts it into tobacco. All recognize this policy, the plausible sugar-coated name of which is "popular sovereignty"

Mr. Lincoln showed up the fallacy of this policy at length, and then made a manly

indication of the principles of the Republican party, urging the necessity of the union of all elements to free our country from its present rule, and closed with an eloquent exhortation for each and every one to do his duty without regard to the sneers and slanders of our political opponents.

At the conclusion of Mr. Lincoln's address great enthusiasm was manifested. Messrs. John F. Trumbull of Stonington, and Daniel P. Tyler of Brooklyn, made brief speeches, when the meeting broke up.