

Now Chicago men were among the first to recognize that Lincoln was thinking in the right direction. In 1856 steps were first taken in Illinois to organize a branch of a new party called the Republican party. It was looked on with more or less disfavor, as the movements of ventures always are and had to stand its own share of guying, but the men who were reforming it were in earnest and particularly anxious to get Lincoln into their ranks. He was not in a hurry about going over, but somehow he was always present when the Republican organizers were doing anything.

The first step seems to have been an editorial convention some time in February, 1856. Lincoln went to this and had a hand in framing the platform adopted. And here the Chicago editors raved in the Chicago Tribune, a paper almost as influential in the Northwest as Greeley's paper was in the Southeast; and George Schneider's Staat's Zeitung the paper which was the organ of all advanced Germans in the Northwest. Both became deeply interested in Lincoln's views. It was nearly three months after this editorial convention before the party itself was organized at Bloomington. The opening of this meeting was not particularly promising. The members seemed all a little afraid of each other and although they adopted their platforms and appointed their delegates, there was a general feeling that they needed money. As a matter of fact, what the convention needed was some kind of moral force which would wield its discordant elements.

"In spite of the best intentions of the members, their most manful efforts, they knew in their hearts that they were still political enemies, that the Whig was still a Whig, the Democrat a Democrat, the Abolitionist an Abolitionist. Man after man was called to the platform and spoke without producing any marked effect, when suddenly there was a call raised of a name not on the programme-- "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. As he turned to his audience there came gradually a great change upon his face. 'There was an expression of intense emotion,' Judge Scott, of Bloomington, once told the author. '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, in fact, had come to the parting of the ways in his political life, to the moment when he must publicly break with his party. For two years he had tried

to fight slavery extension under the name of a Whig. He had found it could not be done, and now in spite of the efforts of his conservative friends who had vainly tried to keep him away from the Bloomington Convention, he was facing that convention, was openly acknowledging that henceforth he worked with the Republican Party.

"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 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 see the triviality of their differences as compared with the tremendous 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 and haltingly, but gradually he grew in force and intensity until his hearers arose from their chairs and with pale faces and quivering lips pressed unconsciously towards him. Starting from the back of the broad platform on 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 on the hips, head back, raised on his tip toes, he seemed like a giant inspired. 'At that moment he was the handsomest man I ever saw,' Judge Scott declared.

"So powerful was his effect on his audience that men and women wept as they cheered and children there that night still remember the scene, though at the time they understood nothing of its meaning. As he went on 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 man,' says one of his auditors. He had made every man of them pure Republican. He did something more. The indignation which the outrages in Kansas and throughout the country had aroused was uncontrolled. Men talked passionately of war. It was at this meeting that Lincoln, after firing his hearers by an expression which became a watchword of the campaign, 'We won't go out of the Union and you shan't,' poured oil on the wrath of the Illinois opponents of the Nebraska bill by advising 'ballots, not bullets.'

"Nothing illustrates better the extraordinary power of Lincoln's speech at

Bloomington than the way he stirred up the newspaper reporters. It was before the stenographer had become acclimated in Illinois, though long-hand reports were regularly taken. Of course, all the leading papers of the State leaning towards the new party, had reporters at the convention."

Joseph Medill, who was representing the Tribune at Bloomington, says that for a few minutes he followed Lincoln, but that he then became so absorbed in the speech itself that he forgot entirely to take notes, forgot everything but Lincoln, and then when the speech was over at last and he came to himself he was standing on the reporters' table, shouting with all his might.

Chicago long talked of this speech, and Lincoln's many friends throughout the State as they would one after another drop into town, and all the Republican leaders and editors there began to suggest that Lincoln was very possibly a man for the United States Senate office that the State had to fill in 1858. When it came to nominating a candidate, it was Cook County, - which is the same thing, of course, as Chicago - which began the convention by announcing its allegiance on a big banner: "Cook County for Lincoln!" The banner aroused the greatest enthusiasm and Lincoln was the unanimous candidate. The story of the campaign is familiar to everybody: Douglas was nominated on the Democratic ticket and after the campaign was under way Lincoln challenged him to a series of joint debates. It is hardly possible, I suppose, for us now to realize the contrast between the two men at this time. It was so great, so overwhelmingly in favor of Douglas that when Mr. Lincoln's best friends knew that he was in for a series of debates with Douglas they felt uneasy. Their lack of confidence, conceal it as they would, was known to Lincoln. One day when a crowd of supporters were gathered together talking, they indulged in a good many gloomy predictions about the forth coming contest. Mr. Lincoln finally passed out. But meeting one gentleman later, said to him: