

(Note for Lincoln's speech on Linder's resolution, delivered in the House of Representatives, in committee of the whole, at Vandalia, Jan. 11, 1837.)

The Sangamo Journal of January 28, 1837, published a speech by Mr. Lincoln on a proposition to investigate the State Bank at Springfield. The speech, delivered in the House of Representatives at Vandalia, in committee of the whole on January 11, was copied by the Journal from the Vandalia Free Press; and it is now republished for the first time since its appearance in the Sangamo Journal of the date named. The paper made this editorial comment:

"Mr. Lincoln's remarks on Mr. Linder's bank resolution in this paper are quite to the point. Our friend carries the true Kentucky rifle, and when he fires he seldom ~~fails~~ fails of sending the shot home."

At the time Mr. Lincoln made this speech, the State Bank of Illinois, located at Springfield, was the principal financial institution of the state. It had been in operation two years. It had generously assumed the celebrated "Wiggins loan" of \$100,000 (money borrowed by the state from Samuel Wiggins in 1830 to redeem the outstanding circulation of the old State Bank, a transaction which had proved exceedingly unpopular with the people), and the state was, perhaps, its heaviest depositor. There were branch banks at several places, and many hundreds of thousands of dollars of State Bank notes were in circulation.

2--Note on Lincoln's speech.

Very soon after the bank began business, it unhappily became a bone of contention among politicians. It was quite generally assailed by the Democrats (there were a few notable exceptions, among them ex-Gov. John Reynolds, then a member of Congress), and was defended by the Whigs. It was charged that the bank was a Whig institution, and that the Whigs used it effectively ~~effectively~~ ^{to} ~~against~~ the cripple and discomfort their political foes. The fight was carried to Washington. The Secretary of the Treasury was besieged with letters from prominent Democrats imploring him to withhold from the bank the patronage of the government, on the ground that ~~the~~ it was "under the dominion of Federalism". Gov. Duncan, in his message of 1836, spoke in approving terms of the institution, saying that it had manifested a disposition to forward the interests of the state, and had "undoubtedly furnished the community with the means of doing much good in carrying on the commerce and improvements of the state." The bank, notwithstanding the fierce attacks made upon it, ~~ranked~~ ranked among the first in the country. On the 28th of January, 1837, (the very day this speech of Mr. Lincoln's was published) its stock sold in New York at \$105 a share, while the stock of the State Bank of the neighboring state of Kentucky sold for only \$92.

On the 7th of January, 1837, Usher F. Linder, a Democratic member from Coles County, introduced in the House a resolution providing for the appointment of a special committee of seven to investigate the management of the State Bank. No direct charges were made, but

Note for Lincoln's speech.

twenty-eight distinct subjects of inquiry were enumerated. Among other things, the committee was directed to inquire whether the commissioners had permitted the stock to be subscribed for under fictitious names; whether the commissioners had not apportioned ~~the stock among~~ much of the stock among themselves; whether the cashiers of the branch banks ^{had} charged and received a commission for their personal influence in negotiating loans; whether usurious rates of interest had not been exacted; and whether there had been any attempt to bribe members of the legislature by the offer of offices in the State Bank or some of its branches.

The House Journal shows that on Jan. 11, four days after ~~the~~ its introduction, ~~at this session~~, Mr. Linder called up the resolution. The House went into committee of the whole to consider it, with Mr. John Dement in the chair. The proceedings in committee of the whole do not appear in the House Journal, but undoubtedly it was ~~there~~ on this occasion that Mr. Lincoln spoke against the resolution. This is the earliest specimen of his speech-making which has been preserved; and perhaps he never made a speech more characteristic of him. There is an exquisite vein of irony running through it; and the flashes of wit, the winning candor, and the clear and persuasive logic peculiar to ~~the man~~ ^{the man} ~~Lincoln~~ have scarcely been surpassed in any of his later forensic efforts. It seems probable that the speech was impromptu; it was no doubt delivered from notes, and afterwards written out by Mr. Lincoln for the papers. Mr. Linder's interruption was inserted; but ~~at~~ the

4--Note for Lincoln's speech.

"applause" and "laughter" which would have interspersed a modern report of a speech like this were modestly omitted.

Mr. Lincoln was in the minority. The resolution, in a modified form, was subsequently adopted, and the State Bank was investigated. But the report of the committee vindicated in every respect the position taken by him. No irregularities were found in the management of the bank; not one of the sensational charges was substantiated; and the conclusion was reached by the committee that "the condition of the State Bank of Illinois is sound and its credit fully established."

But this happy state of things did not continue long. This was a year of financial disaster; and soon after the adjournment of the legislature the State Bank was forced to follow the other banks of the country in ~~suspending~~ the suspension of specie payment. An extra session of the legislature helped it out temporarily. The bank, though greatly ~~harassed~~ harassed by its enemies, managed to do business until 1842, when it "exploded with a crash".

It will be interesting to know something of Usher F. Linder, the author of the resolution, and himself the subject of a no small share of Mr. Lincoln's remarks. He was then serving his first term in the legislature. Born in Hardin County, Ky., within ten miles of Lincoln's birthplace, in the same year and almost in the same month, he had come to Illinois in 1835, and was already a leading lawyer and influential politician--so influential, in fact, that at this session (1837) the legislature elected him Attorney General of Illinois. His ~~par~~

5--Note for Lincoln's speech.

personality was singularly interesting. He was intensely erratic; governed mostly by impulse; morally ^{frail} ~~weak~~, but a giant intellectually; at times capable of the ^{sublimest flights of} ~~best~~ eloquence; a great wit, and a perfect master of ~~investive and conversative~~ sarcasm and invective. He was early familiar with the gutter; and during his first winter at Vandalia, while intoxicated, he shot at a fellow member (Wilson Lagow), who was sitting quietly in a barber's chair. Soon after this he began delivering temperance lectures; a practice which he kept up, in periods of ~~sublimity~~ penitence and sobriety, in after years. His political career was checkered. He was first a Democrat, then a Whig, and at last a pro-slavery Democrat, being a delegate to the Charleston convention in 1860. He served four terms in the legislature. He was one of the most brilliant and successful lawyers on the old circuit, and he and Lincoln were often associated in important cases.

Mr. Linder died in Chicago in 1876. He left a book of "Reminiscences of the Early Bench and Bar of Illinois", and in this he describes his first meeting with Lincoln. It was at Charleston, Ill., in 1835. Lincoln was then on a visit to his father and step-mother. "He was a very modest and retiring man," says Linder, "dressed in a plain suit of black jeans. He did not make any marked impression on me, or any other member of the bar. . . . I had known his relatives in Kentucky, and he asked me about them. . . . He had the appearance of a good-natured, easy, unambitious man of plain, good sense, unobtrusive in his manners." At Vandalia, Linder became better acquainted with Lincoln,

6.--Note for Lincoln's speech.

but failed to observe any "promise of his being the first man in Illinois,as he afterwards became. He made a good many speeches in the legislature,mostly on local subjects."--J.McCan Davis.

(Note for Dr.Laurance's campaign banner)

A Campaign Banner of 1860.

Soon after Mr.Lincoln's nomination in 1860,the "Wide-Awake Company" was organized at Waynesville,De Witt County,Ill. It was a Republican campaign club. Dr.R.N.Laurance,one of its members,painted a banner for the company. This banner was carried through the campaign. At the great rally at Springfield on the 8th of August--the monster rally of the campaign--the "Wide-Awake Company" with its banner headed the procession. The banner is still owned by Dr. Laurance,who lives at Lincoln, Ill.--J.McCan Davis.