

THE LOUISVILLE DAILY JOURNAL.

VOL. XXXI

LOUISVILLE, KENTUCKY, THURSDAY, MARCH 7, 1861

NO. 66

Union Makes Us Strong

There has been much talk as of late about secession, what we should do regarding secession here in Kentucky, and how we should respond to the election of Abraham Lincoln to the office of President. We now have the text of Lincoln's Inaugural Address and can better understand his plans for the nation and we are validated in our beliefs that he does not plan to outlaw slavery or interfere with it here or anywhere else it already exists. Said Lincoln, "I have no purpose, directly or indirectly, to interfere with the institution of slavery in the States where it exists. I believe I have no lawful right to do so, and I have no inclination to do so" (Basler, 580). Additionally, he spoke of the fact that he believes the Fugitive Slave Law – a law that we at the Daily Journal are no friend of – should be conformed to as long as it remains on the law books. Here, two of the causes of the present crisis, according to South Carolina and her fellow rebel states, are refuted by the selfsame person they claim wants to free their slaves and outlaw their peculiar institution. These pretended causes have impelled South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana, and Texas to sever the constitutional bonds of Union. Worse, these rebel states have sent representatives to our own state of Kentucky as well as other slaveholding states to urge us to illegally separate as they have.

Lincoln offers advice on the legality of separation in his Inaugural Address. His answer is a resounding negative that it is legal or was ever intended to be possible by the Framers of our great government. "I hold, that in contemplation of universal law, and of the Constitution, the Union of these States is perpetual. Perpetuity is implied, if not expressed, in the fundamental law of all national governments. It is safe to assert that no government proper, ever had a Provision in its organic law for its own termination" (Basler, 582). These seven states, believing that because they were a party to the formation of the government, they may choose to leave it, are subscribing to a false belief. We Kentuckians must not succumb to this falsehood! The Union is everlasting! The Union is the source of our strength and our place in the world. What if these rebel states decide, upon our secession vote, that they do not want to include us in their new nation? Where will the Commonwealth of Kentucky be in that case? Are we strong enough to survive on our own in the family of nations? Kentuckians are assuredly the strongest of all people throughout the world, but would we have the resources and men to defend our borders against an attack from the North as well as the South? We are assured of our place in the Union; our place with the rebels is tenuous at best. Lincoln explains that secession creates a precedent where a minority – believing they are oppressed – will divide and leave. What is to stop another minority within South Carolina, or Alabama, or Mississippi, from feeling the sting of oppression at some later date and dividing anew? "Secession," says Lincoln, "is the essence of anarchy" (Basler, 585)

Lincoln stresses that "no State . . . can lawfully get out of the Union" (Basler, 582-83). The laws of the United States are still in effect in the rebel states. Do you believe the federal government will simply let her territory go? Of course not, but Lincoln makes a vow that there will be no violence, there will be no bloodshed, "unless it be forced upon the national authority" (Basler, 583). This is not what the rebels expect, we think. And for what reason are they consumed with destroying the Union? To protect something that has never been destroyed – their right to property in slaves.

Nowhere in the Address does Lincoln threaten the rebel states, or other states that may be considering secession. He does, however, explain that even if it were legal, there is no way for the two sections to physically separate from one another. Our own state of Kentucky would go from the middle of the nation to a territory on the border, whether that international border be to our north or to our south. Are either of these conditions more beneficial to us than our current position within the Union, and under her protection? No. "Can aliens make treaties easier than friends can make laws? Can treaties be more faithfully enforced between aliens, than laws can among friends?" questions Lincoln. If we leave, we must rebuild our trade networks from the ground up; if we stay, most of them remain intact and we will have the support of the Union to rebuild the others.

On the contrary, the so-called president of the so-called Confederate States of America, Jefferson Davis, spoke of the reasons for secession that have been so soundly refuted by Lincoln. Davis believes that there can no longer be a successful, peaceful appeal to the ballot box – *upon the election of ONE MAN!* President Lincoln is but one man – he cannot change laws on his own, he cannot outlaw slavery on his own. Davis claims that the rebel states have done nothing wrong and were pushed out by the aggression of the North. What immediate aggression is he referring to? A fairly contested election where the rebels are the sore losers because their preferred candidate was not victorious? These rebel states are but spoiled children who, when bested at a game, take their toys and return home out of spite. Davis also professes that the South has "vainly endeavored to secure tranquility" (CP, 204), but their rebelliousness can be seen as nothing less than an act of defiance and rebellion. We must not, we cannot, join them in this treachery!

We are at a difficult crossroads, but walking away from the nation that the blood of our fathers built is not the answer. We must remain in the Union, and work within the constitutional system to achieve what we as a people want. At worst, we find Lincoln to be hostile to our interests and we replace him in four short years. We should not destroy in a moment's passion what took years of careful compromise to build.