

## Abraham Lincoln papers

From Schuyler Colfax to Abraham Lincoln, May 30, 1860

Washn. City, May 30. 1860.

My dear sir,

It is too bad to write you three letters in a week; we having received your note this morning,<sup>1</sup> & having had a long interview with R. W. Thompson<sup>2</sup> this morning, thought it best to write you the result. I did not of course mention any thing of your having written to him; but told him that he held the fate of Inda. in his hands & possibly with it the Prest. Election & I was anxious to know what he had decided on. He replied, (I give you the purport of the whole conversation,) that he did not desire to commit himself positively till after that Baltimore Convention,<sup>3</sup> but that his opinion was as follows. The Chicago platform contained some things with which he did not agree: but knowing you, & having confidence in you, both from personal knowledge & from having read your discussions with Douglas,<sup>4</sup> he had the highest possible confidence in you, and the most assured conviction that you could do right. That Indiana must not be carried by the Democracy; and that he expected to oppose the formation of any Bell<sup>5</sup> Electoral ticket in that State, so that it might be carried for you, as, in the event, it would certainly be.

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1 For Lincoln's May 26 note to Colfax, see *Collected Works*, IV, 54.

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2 Richard W. Thompson

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3 The Democratic National Convention had met in Charleston, South Carolina in April and adjourned without selecting a presidential candidate. The convention was set to re-convene in Baltimore in June.

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4 Stephen A. Douglas

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5 Senator John Bell of Tennessee was the presidential nominee of the Constitutional Union Party.

He also added that he had recently been at his birth place in Caulpepper, Va, speaking there; & that at Hon Mr. Pendleton's,<sup>6</sup> in company with a dozen Southern Whigs he propounded to them the

question what he should do, if it was clearly ascertained that the Bell men had the balance of power, & that running a ticket in Indiana could give the State to the Democracy; & they all agreed that the State Democracy should be beaten, & the State given to you. He added that this was not for public repetition.

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6 John S. Pendleton had served as a Whig in the U. S. House of Representatives (1845-49). Pendleton's tenure in Congress coincided with the single term served by Abraham Lincoln.

I cannot give you all the conversation; but there is no doubt that after the Balt. Convention, Mr. Thompson intends to come out publicly for you, as the only candidate who can carry Inda. against the Democracy, & probably suggesting that the Opposition should run Lincoln tickets in the North & Bell tickets in the South, carrying in this way every possible State agst. the Democracy.

The Philadelphia demonstration was a magnificent one, & our friends say the most significant of all, was the Fillmore<sup>7</sup> Rangers & German Reps. marching together in the procession. Still Pa & N. J. are to be our hardest States to carry.

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7 Many members of the defunct American Party, often referred to as "Know Nothings," still identified with former president Millard Fillmore who had received the presidential nomination of their party in 1856. In 1860, many Know Nothings joined the Constitutional Union Party, but the Republicans made a concerted effort to court the Know Nothings and bring them into the party.

In haste Yrs truly

Schuyler Colfax

Have written this while debate is going on; but trust it is coherent.