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Indiana in the Douglas-Buchanan Contest of 1856

[The following article has been prepared by the *Editor*, with the generous consent of Mr. George Fort Milton, historian and editor of the *Chattanooga News*, from the manuscript of his forthcoming book, *The Eve of Conflict—Stephen A. Douglas and the Needless War*. This volume is expected to come from the press in October. The matter here presented has been selected with the object of showing the great importance of Indiana in the fateful decision of the Democratic National Convention in 1856.]

During the eighteen-fifties, it was a political commonplace that Stephen A. Douglas had presidential ambitions. After his championship of the Kansas-Nebraska bill, however, Democratic politicians agreed that the Senator from Illinois had been "postponed." To them it seemed that he had lost his availability in the North, and since the South had never worked hard for a northern candidate without northern availability, he had not gained strength in the South. Even if this were not true, the South was not powerful enough to elect a president.¹

The chief gainer by the decline in the Douglas fortunes was James Buchanan, then representing the United States in England. While he continued to assert his loyalty to President Pierce, his availability increased. The continued improvement in his chances was mainly due to the fact that he was out of the country during the fight over the Kansas-Nebraska measure. Pierce, who approved the bill, stated soon thereafter that he would not be a candidate to succeed himself, and let Buchan-

¹ John W. Forney to Buchanan, Washington, Jan. 10, Feb. 12, Mar. 19, 1854; J. Glancey Jones to Buchanan, Washington, Mar. 29, 1854; J. W. Bowlin to Buchanan, St. Louis, Apr. 21, 1854 (Buchanan Mss.).

an's friends know that he believed the absent statesman to be the only Democrat who could win in 1856.²

For a time Douglas felt that he should not be a candidate,³ and he saw to it that the public should be informed of his decision not to enter the race.⁴ Pierce did not long remain hopeless in regard to his own prospects. In fact he began to recover his ambition early in 1855 and soon he was out to obtain a renomination. As a means to this end, he sought to enlist the support of Douglas. He sought advice from the Senator, developed a deep interest in him and his family and appointed his good friend of Jacksonville, Illinois, Murry McConnell, Fifth Auditor of the Treasury. There could be no doubt of the President's determination to make an ally of the Little Giant.⁵ In response to the President's moves, Douglas, though believing that Pierce could not receive the nomination, advised his friends not to interfere with the President's efforts, and let them know that he intended to treat the administration kindly.⁶

Meanwhile the true friends of Douglas were anxious that he should remain in reserve as a possible candidate.⁷ Writing to Howell Cobb of Georgia, Douglas voiced his interest in a sound straight-forward platform which would not be "susceptible of one construction at the North and another at the South." If his name should be connected with the presidential contest, he declared it must be by the voluntary act of his friends prompted by a desire for the triumph of the cause. There must be no reference to his personal wishes or advantage, and he must have no personal agency in any move to make him the candidate "directly or indirectly by word or deed."⁸

In the later months of 1855, Douglas suffered a long illness, during which he had ample time to consider the political situation in relation to his own future. His friends were pressing more vigorously for his entry into the contest. By the begin-

² Daniel E. Sickles to Buchanan, New York, Aug. 15, 1854; Forney to Buchanan, Washington, Nov. 27, Dec. 25, 1854 (Buchanan Mss.).

³ Sickles to Buchanan, New York, Aug. 15, 1845 (Buchanan Mss.).

⁴ Douglas to James W. Sheahan, Washington, Feb. 6, 1855 (Sheahan Mss.).

⁵ Pierce to Douglas, Washington, May 3, 28, June 18, July 25, 1855 (Douglas Mss.).

⁶ Forney to Buchanan, Washington, Aug. 12, Oct. 22-23, 1855 (Buchanan Mss.). This policy was also that of Lewis Cass. Forney wrote: "I have this from the lips of the first [Douglas] and Nicholson has it by letter from Cass".

⁷ Samuel Treat to Douglas, St. Louis, Apr. 8, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

⁸ Douglas to Howell Cobb, Lexington, Ky., Oct. 6, 1855 (Erwin Mss.).

ning of the new year, he had changed his mind, and now began the fight to obtain the nomination for himself. He had become convinced, it seems, that the Kansas-Nebraska issue had not "postponed" him, the Know-Nothing movement was going according to his prophecy, and the prohibition tide was on the wane. There remained no specific issue to render him unavailable as the party choice.

It may also be noted that Douglas was not impressed by the other candidates. He became certain that even should he remain on the sidelines, it would be impossible for President Pierce to win the prize. R. M. T. Hunter of Virginia, though sound on the tariff question, lacked the basic support to have a real chance. The talk about Jesse D. Bright of Indiana as a candidate seemed ridiculous. The only really formidable contender was James Buchanan, who was regarded by Douglas as a trimmer and a humbug. Nevertheless Old Buck, it was apparent, would easily become the standard bearer of the party unless the Senator from Illinois should himself enter the lists.

Add to these factors in the situation the fact that in nearly every state in the Union there was a group of loyal, unquenchable supporters determined that he get into the contest and constantly driving to that end, and it is not strange that the Little Giant agreed to come to grips with the Squire of Lancaster.⁹ His mind once made up, the slowness of his convalescence became more irksome to Douglas. He read the papers eagerly, followed the details of the Democrats' desperate and eventually unavailing battle to prevent the election of a Republican as Speaker of the House, wrote incessantly to party leaders in Washington, and set his Ohio friends to work warming up the party leaders in other States.¹⁰

Progress was quickly reported. From Ohio came the word that the delegation to the Cincinnati Convention was as sure as that of Illinois. Iowa and Wisconsin would name Douglas delegates. With this foundation, the plan was formed "to com-

⁹ James B. Steadman to Senator George E. Pugh, Columbus, O., Nov. 29, 1855 (Douglas Mss.). Thomas L. Harris to Charles H. Lanphier, Washington, Dec. 17, 1855, Jan. 8, 1856 (Patton Mss.).

¹⁰ Douglas to Howell Cobb, Cleveland, Jan. 8, 1856 (Erwin Mss.); Douglas to H. M. Rice, Cleveland, Dec. 28, 1855 (original copy owned by Mr. H. W. Townsend of Lexington, Ky.); Douglas to D. S. Reid, Cleveland, Jan. 11, 1856 (N.C. State Hist. Commission); H. V. Wilson to John C. Breckinridge, Cleveland, Jan. 21, 1856 (Breckinridge Mss.). H. B. Payne of Cleveland was to be another adviser in the West.

bine the whole Northwest as a unit."¹¹ This would tend to strengthen Pierce, who had just come forward as a candidate, in the South, and thus leave the slaveholding states uncommitted for the time.

Douglas was determined to push the principle of popular sovereignty, feeling sure that no one could be nominated who would not identify himself with it. It was February 11 before Douglas reached Washington. His general health was substantially restored, but on account of the condition of his throat he was unable to participate in the senatorial debate. He now confided to intimates that he had been forced into the contest—that he was obliged to permit his friends to “use his name or be driven to ignore the great act of his life.” He would not, however, deny to others the same right which his friends claimed for him.¹²

Why did Douglas not win the nomination at the hands of the Democratic National Convention of 1856? In each state there was a Democratic committee chiefly officered by the holders of public jobs. State conventions were usually controlled by patronage, past, present and prospective. National conventions were largely made up of delegates selected under such influences. Under the vicious rule of senatorial courtesy in the confirmation of federal appointments, any Senator belonging to the party in power held the whip hand in his own state. All too often it was possible for a few leaders, through the spoils system, to negative the public wish. The Democratic party had an additional handicap, the two-thirds rule, a throttling device, bestowing the veto power on minorities and often making bosses supreme.

Well aware of the set-up, Douglas played the game under the established rules. In 1856 he must not only arouse the enthusiasm of the rank and file but negotiate with and obtain the support of an adequate number of political leaders. This meant that he must have New York, and, as already indicated, a necessary part of his strategy if successful, must be the practical unification of the Northwest behind him.

With Ohio, Illinois, Wisconsin and Iowa apparently swinging into line, it was very important to gain Indiana. Here the powerful party boss was the shift, evasive, double-dealing

¹¹ Douglas to Sheahan, Cleveland, Jan. 11, 1856 (Sheahan Mss.); H. V. Wilson to Breckinridge, Cleveland, Jan. 21, 1856 (Breckinridge Mss.).

¹² H. M. Rice to Breckinridge, Washington, Feb. 3, 12, 1856 (*ibid.*).

Senator Bright. He was a man of mediocre ability, but he had a genius for political chicanery and had become strong through the distribution of patronage. In the summer of 1854, Douglas believed that he and Bright had gotten upon highly cordial, personal terms. During that year Bright was sending him little notes and showing him all manner of friendly attentions.¹³ But the Indiana Senator was himself ambitious, and for years had been incubating the thought that he himself was of presidential stature.

Douglas had every reason to know of Bright's real position. Senator Daniel E. Yulee of Florida had impressively warned him, that, whatever might be the surface indications, Bright was only waiting for a chance to deal a death blow. Though feeling the truth of this warning, Douglas while endeavoring to win Bright to his side went so far as to put him into the land speculation at Superior. But neither friendship nor financial advantage could make a crooked stick straight.

When Douglas determined to seek the nomination in 1856, he conferred with Bright, who promised his own support and that of his State. The Little Giant proceeded on that assumption.¹⁴ The outcome was to prove that Douglas had misplaced his faith.

Next to his own overweening ambitions, Bright's course was animated by a desire to help Buchanan and by a bitter hatred of Pierce.¹⁵ He explained to Douglas that the Indiana delegation would instruct for himself as a favorite son, but that this would not interfere with the eventual vote. In January, 1856, Indiana antagonists of the Bright régime made a futile effort to obtain control, but they could not check the steam-roller. Bright's men were entrenched in power, the Legislature re-elected him and his then pliant colleague, Graham N. Fitch, to the Senate.¹⁶ The state convention instructed the delegates to the National Convention for Bright.

¹³ Sickles to Buchanan, Aug. 15, 1854 (Buchanan Mss.) ; George W. Jones to Bright, Dubuque, May 6, 1855 (Douglas Mss.). This letter was sent to Douglas by Bright.

¹⁴ There is no direct documentary evidence of this agreement, but the correspondence of Douglas during January, February and March of 1856, was full of references to Bright's promise.

¹⁵ Forney to Buchanan, Philadelphia, Nov. 27, 1856 (Buchanan Mss.). During a Philadelphia election involving Buchanan's prestige, Bright offered \$1,000 toward the campaign expenses—a good index of his basic intent.

¹⁶ John L. Robinson to Howell Cobb, Indianapolis, Jan. 30, 1856 (Erwin Mss.). Gov. Joseph A. Wright sought to defeat Fitch, but seeing that he would be beaten in the Democratic caucus, withdrew for a diplomatic appointment. Bright and Fitch were both supported unanimously in the caucus.

This discouraged the Douglas men in Indiana, who put no confidence in Bright's word. "If the Northwest is divided," one of them wrote Richardson, "we have but little hope." It would not be hard to get southern delegates, the chief difficulty was at home. The Buchanan men were correspondingly elated; things were going well, they reported. Bright really hoped for a ticket made up of Hunter and himself, but he preferred Buchanan to Douglas or Pierce, and he had Indiana in his hand.¹⁷

While Douglas was passing through his period of indecision, Buchanan's lieutenants had been constantly at work in the Northwest, and when he finally made up his mind, he found trouble throughout that section. He had every reason to expect Michigan's and Wisconsin's Democracy to support him, but the Buchaneers had shown "great industry for months," and their organization in these States proved "extended and minute."¹⁸

All this, however, was not apparent at the turn of the year. Douglas believed Bright's promise, and thought old relations in Michigan and Wisconsin would assure a general western support. All through the South his friends became active, and began to get second-choice strength. Could the New York question be settled? If so, success was at hand.

Douglas selected as his confidential men for the pre-convention campaign David T. Disney of Ohio and General J. W. Singleton of Illinois.¹⁹ The Buchanan men had much the start everywhere, but they soon realized that they had a real fight on their hands when Douglas admitted that he intended to make the race in order to uphold the principle of popular sovereignty and his men began to work.

Disney spent much time in New York where he hoped to bring both the "Hards" and "Softs," the warring Democratic factions, to the side of Douglas. When he reached a certain stage in his New York efforts, Disney wrote his chief, making the following inquiry: "Can you not get Bright to write Dickinson [Daniel S. Dickinson, leader of the "Hards"]²⁰

¹⁷ William J. Brown to Richardson, Indianapolis, Jan. 30, 1856 (Douglas Mss.); George N. Sanders to Buchanan, Washington, Feb. 27, 1856 (Buchanan Mss.).

¹⁸ D. A. Noble to Douglas, Monroe, Mich., Apr. 9, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

¹⁹ Douglas to Singleton, Washington, March 16, 1856 (Ill. State Hist. Soc. Mss.). Singleton was drafted by Lincoln to aid him in his campaign for reelection in 1864, and he also sent him to Richmond to negotiate for peace with Jefferson Davis.

²⁰ Disney to Douglas, New York, Feb. 29, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

urging him to come into the move, and to take the initiative in New York and in your favor?" A few days later Disney, having learned that Bright had gone to Philadelphia to meet Daniel E. Sickles, wanted to know if Bright had broken faith. Disney's fear was increased when he met Judah P. Benjamin at the Astor House, and learned from him that Bright had declared that Buchanan would win. This remark of the Indiana boss was passed on to Douglas at once and he was urged to look into the matter without delay.²¹

For a while Douglas could not aid Disney, because of a return of his illness. When he had sufficiently recovered, he did what he could to aid the cause in New York. He found difficulty in getting Bright to write the desired letter to Dickinson, and became less sanguine of Bright's loyalty. In the end, Disney and Singleton were unable to make an authoritative agreement with Dickinson and the "Hards." The factional war went on in New York, and Douglas was left to rely on the "Softs" for support. This element, which was led by William L. Marcy, promised to support Douglas.²²

While the lieutenants of the Senator were negotiating with state leaders in secret, there were encouraging manifestations of growing public support for the principle of popular sovereignty and its champion. The famous report on the troubles in Kansas which Douglas as chairman of the Committee on Territories made to the Senate on March 12, 1856, and his part in the ensuing debate, gave a powerful stimulus to his campaign. North and South, Democrats applauded the stand of Douglas. In New York, for example, a rapid shift was under way on the subject of popular sovereignty. Douglas received scores of approving letters.²³

Buchanan's lieutenants believed that the entry of Douglas had eliminated the President. However, though bitter against Douglas for the time being, the friends of Pierce continued the fight, their chief effort being to consolidate the South, in which they were only partially successful. A number of the southern delegations were scheduled to vote for Douglas after

²¹ Disney to Douglas, [New York] Mar. 2 1856 (*ibid.*).

²² A. P. Edgerton to Douglas, Hicksville, O. (Douglas Mss.). Edgerton had an interview with Marcy's able lieutenant, Dean Richmond, and wrote Douglas about it.

²³ Stephen Dillaye to Douglas, Syracuse, N.Y., Mar. 22, 1856; E. C. West to Douglas, New York, Apr. 8, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

supporting Pierce for a few ballots.²⁴ A number of others were set for Buchanan against both Pierce and Douglas.

In the West, Douglas' efforts were check-mated by the treachery of Senator Bright. The Buchaneers had been dicker-ing with the Indiana Senator for several months. John M. Slidell, who was in charge of the negotiations, found that the price was high, in fact, the control of all major Federal ap-pointments for the Northwest. But it was not for nothing that Slidell had had a Tammany training. He accepted the proposition, the agreement was made, and "the patronage for the Northwest was disposed of." Slidell thought the fight won, and wrote Buchanan: "We can rely on Bright." This agree-ment was confirmed by Buchanan, when he became president, and a general patronage triumvirate of Slidell, the campaign manager, Bright, the glorious apostate, and Corcoran, the campaign's financial angel, was set up.²⁵

Douglas probably suspected what had happened, but Bright did not disclose his hand, and comforting reports continued to come from the Little Giant's friends in Bright's State. "Your name is a household word in Indiana," a scout wrote Douglas. "The *People* are for you and the Politicians know it." Bright's name would not be presented to the Cincinnati convention, perhaps Hunter's would not. By May, however, Bright's treachery became clear, and Douglas was advised of the exact nature of "Bright's game"—to claim the right to control the vote of the Indiana delegation all through the Democratic Convention at Cincinnati.²⁶

Slidell was able to hold Michigan for Buchanan against the efforts of Disney. Senator Charles E. Stuart was thoroughly in harmony with the efforts of Buchanan's man-ager and Cass was sympathetic. Buchanan sentiment was almost non-existent among the people, but the lieutenants of Douglas could not check the patronage machine and the dele-gates were instructed for Buchanan. Late in May, President Pierce vetoed a bill containing a Michigan pork-barrel item

²⁴ John F. Poppenheim to Douglas, Charleston, S.C., May 9, 1856; Geo. Harris to Douglas, New York, May 22, 1856 (Douglas Mss.). The Harris here mentioned was a Navy Paymaster from Tennessee, who had recently been on a trip to his native state.

²⁵ In February, 1857, Douglas pierced to the bottom of this deal, and his indignation over it was the beginning of his breach with Buchanan the coming December. Douglas to Samuel Treat, Washington, March 11, 1856, (Missouri Historical Society Mss.); J. Glancy Jones to Buchanan, Washington, Mar. 22, 1856 (Buchanan Mss.).

²⁶ Winslow S. Pierce to Douglas, Indianapolis, Mar. 8, 1856; U. F. Linder to Douglas, Terre Haute, Mar. 15, 1856; Austin H. Brown to Douglas, Indianapolis, May 3, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

which incensed the state. The Michigan delegates set to work lobbying for Buchanan as soon as they reached Cincinnati.

The record was not all one of disaster. California selected a delegation of "out and out Nebraska Democrats" believed to be favorable to Douglas. Buchanan had a good start in Wisconsin, but the fight for Douglas resulted in the choice of delegates friendly to him. Ohio workers reported that twenty-six of the delegates chosen would support the Illinois Senator, while Missouri stood nobly by him.²⁷

The Democratic state convention of Illinois which met in May, instructed for Douglas, but in the choosing of delegates "came near botching the whole business." A majority of the delegates were at heart unfriendly, while the only prominent friend of Douglas in the group was W. A. Richardson. The Buchanan men of Illinois had performed so cleverly that the chief reliance of the seeming victors was the power of instructions.²⁸

On the eve of the Convention, Buchanan was forced to state that he acquiesced in the principle of the Kansas-Nebraska Act, and then to declare that had he been in Congress, he would have voted for the measure. The Douglasites made a minor manœuvre by the suggestion of Hunter of Virginia for President, and the Buchaneers countered with a trial-balloon for Jefferson Davis.²⁹ Circumstances forced the Douglas and Pierce elements into closer harmony.³⁰ A rumor arose in Washington that Douglas and Hunter had combined to nominate Pierce. Slidell who had not expected to attend the Convention hastened to Cincinnati. Corcoran heard the rumor and relayed it to Bright. There is no evidence that the rumor had substantial foundation, but it enabled the Indiana boss to throw off his mask, which he did by sending word to Douglas that Indiana would be for Buchanan "from beginning to end."³¹

The Convention met on June 2, but headquarters of the candidates were opened two weeks ahead of time. Slidell,

²⁷ Samuel Treat to Douglas, St. Louis, Apr. 8, 1856; D. Kennett to Douglas, Apr. 24, 1856; Richard F. Barry to Douglas, St. Louis, May 25, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

²⁸ Singleton to Douglas, Quincy, Ill., May 16, 1856; Harris to Douglas, Springfield, Ill., May 16, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

²⁹ J. Glancey Jones to Buchanan, Washington, Mar. 22, 1856; Slidell to Buchanan, Washington, May 2, 1856; Forney to Buchanan, Philadelphia, May 4, 1856 (Buchanan Mss.).

³⁰ Wilson Lumpkin to Pierce, Athens, Ga., May 19, 1856 (Pierce Mss.); Samuel Medary to Douglas, North Wood, Ohio, May 25, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

³¹ Slidell to Buchanan, Washington, May 26, 1856; Corcoran to Buchanan, Washington, May 27, 1856 (Buchanan Mss.).

Bright and W. W. Corcoran entertained lavishly and worked strenuously for Buchanan with a large suite of rooms at the Burnet House. At the Douglas headquarters, which cost \$150 per day, were Richardson and Harris of Illinois, Disney and Singleton, pre-convention strategists, and other devoted supporters of the Little Giant, including Washington McLean of the Cincinnati *Enquirer*, James B. Steadman of Columbus and Daniel P. Rhodes of Cleveland.³²

In addition to McLean's efforts in the *Enquirer*, the Douglas campaigners received staunch support from the Cincinnati *Gazette*. The Little Giant could carry every Northern State Buchanan could carry, this paper editorially insisted, and could carry the South without question. Old Buck's nomination would "be a triumph of political cowardice on the one hand, and of treachery and ingratitude on the other." Buchanan's gains were among the "weak-backed and weak-kneed syllabub politicians."³³

All this was very well, but the "weak-backed portion of the party" went about the Cincinnati job in a very intelligent way. Slidell, Bright and Corcoran arranged for the Pennsylvania delegation to bring with it "several hundred followers, to make an outside pressure," and this began to be vociferously exerted from Saturday preceeding the convention. Some delegates objected that "the noise they occasion resembles running water passing over rocks in shallow places," but it had quite an effect.

By one of the curious quirks of the game, this Buchanan clacqe was supplemented by a Cincinnati faction. Wash McLean, it seemed, had sought to oust the ruling Democratic machine, which had declared war to the death upon the *Enquirer*, its publisher and all candidates he was supporting. When McLean became active at Douglas' headquarters and talked loudly of his intimacy and influence with the Little Giant, this "raised up the whole party" of his enemies in Cincinnati. The Democratic Association "acted systematically, and detached the members in squads of fifty to each hotel in town to clamor for Buchanan." This contributed no little to making "the outside pressure ten to one for Buchanan."³⁴

³² E. C. West to Douglas, Cincinnati, May 22, 1856; D. P. Rhodes to Douglas, Cincinnati, May 28, 1856; T. M. Ward to Douglas, Cincinnati, June 1, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

³³ Cincinnati *Gazette*, June 4, 1856.

³⁴ T. M. Ward to Douglas, Cincinnati, June 1, 1856; D. T. Disney to Douglas, Cincinnati, June 7, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

To offset this manufactured enthusiasm proved almost impossible. Pierce had few enthusiastic supporters and these had little hope. A score or more of loyal Douglas boosters came along with the Illinois delegation, and these were supplemented by a large group from southeastern Indiana. These did their best, but to face the cries of the Buchanan men that arose all about them was a tremendous task. "Availability," "Pennsylvania's last chance," "safe man," "prudent, politic statesman," "he can carry the doubtful Northern States"—these were the phrases that were used to create the psychology of victory. Deeper than this, undeniably there was a general wish for political pacification, and Buchanan's age, his supposedly valuable experience, his well advertised moderation of views, brought this sentiment to his support. Whigs just coming over to the Democratic party, tender-toed Democrats "and all the unsound" moved towards Old Buck.³⁵

The arriving delegations could not fail to be affected by the political atmosphere in Cincinnati, but some were steeled in determination. Alabama and Arkansas caucused on Saturday, May 31, pledged Pierce first, then the Little Giant. The Pierce-Douglas men in the Georgia delegation staged a comeback and obtained the first full vote for Pierce. Buchanan's leaders were not frightened. Things seemed to be going well. They would break-down Pierce in New England and New York, they would shatter Douglas in the Northwest.³⁶

Despite Bright, Douglas had not lost hope for the Indiana delegation. His friends had remained extraordinarily active to the end, and mass meetings demanded that the delegates vote for him. This revolt against the work of the politicians who had controlled the state convention seemed to have the desired effect. When the delegates left Indiana, a majority had expressed a "determination" to go for Douglas as desired by "the Democratic masses throughout the State." But Bright met them at Cincinnati, his persuasions were effective and the caucus vote of Saturday night was Buchanan, 16; Douglas, 10. The majority clapped on the unit rule and the deed was done.³⁷

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ T. J. Reynolds to Buchanan, Cincinnati, June 1, 1856 (Buchanan Mss.).

³⁷ Forney to Buchanan, Washington, Nov. 12, 1856 (Buchanan Mss.). "It is quite clear" explained Forney, "that to Bright's indomitable energy, we are indebted for the two last great results in Indiana, as we were in June for the *coup d'état* which gave us the vote of Indiana in convention."

The decision of the Indiana delegation was a major disaster. Indiana's stand immediately upset Ohio, drove the waverers from the standard of Douglas and cost him the major portion of that delegation. The New York "Hards" arrived with their minds about made up to vote for Douglas, "with a card in reserve for Dickinson." Disturbed by the Indiana action, they succumbed to pressure applied by Bright and Slidell and made a bargain to go for Old Buck. "Indiana is playing the very old Harry with us," a Douglas aide hastened to report.

Douglas leaders were both enraged and aghast. They breathed fulminations on the deserters, declaring the day would come to "reward Indiana and Ohio for their treachery." There was not a redeeming spot in the entire Indiana delegation, "not a star to light the darkness of her treachery." She had deserted in 1852 at Baltimore and now she had "closed the volume of ingratitude." Denunciations of treachery did not alter the gloom of that Sunday. It was not long until rumors that Douglas would withdraw were flying about the hotels. The Buchaneers pressed their advantage, proposing that the Douglas managers agree that the candidate having the largest strength should receive the votes of the Douglas delegates on the second ballot.

This ingenious offer was promptly rejected, but there was no concealing the despair of the Douglas men. "Indiana is all gone—and wrong," Richardson advised his chief, while expressing his individual judgment against continuing the fight. Buchanan was strong, had worked up "forty candidates" for Vice President, and would "cheat them all." However, though he thought it "wrong" to continue, not being provided with a letter of withdrawal from the Senator, the manager could not veto the demand of the Illinois delegates who were "wild" for the presentation of the Little Giant's name. Richardson was anxious that Douglas should "be borne from the contest without dishonor," if the tide should continue to run against him.³⁸

The Convention opened on Monday, June 2. The platform committee was unanimous on the planks about popular sovereignty and Kansas. When this was announced, the Convention went wild. When the sentence recognizing the principles in the Kansas-Nebraska Act as embodying "the only sound solution" of the slavery question was read, delegates

³⁸ Richardson to Douglas, Cincinnati, June 1, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

threw their hats in the air and shouted and cheered for some minutes. The platform was adopted by subjects. On popular sovereignty there was not a single negative vote.³⁹

When the first ballot was taken on Tuesday, the count stood; 131½, for Buchanan; 118, for Pierce; 33, for Douglas; and 4, for Cass. There was no major change until the seventh roll-call, when some of the southern friends of Pierce shifted to Douglas. The last ballot of the day, the fourteenth, showed that Douglas had 63 to 75 for Pierce, but Old Buck had crept up to 152½. All night long leaders strove to move key delegations. Disney almost won Virginia over, but in the caucus, the Douglas men were two votes shy.

On Wednesday morning, the President's own state, New Hampshire, produced great excitement by swinging to Douglas. His vote mounted to 118, but the same ballot revealed Tennessee going to Buchanan. Had this important state continued to support Douglas as had been the case for ten preceding ballots, he would have had 130 to Buchanan's 156. The shift of Tennessee at this moment was critical, causing the Missouri and Kentucky delegations to be "demoralized by fear." Then came the sixteenth roll-call. Douglas gained four more votes and Buchanan still lacked the necessary two-thirds. It was at this time, however, that the name of Douglas with withdrawn by Richardson.

William Preston of Kentucky, a former Whig, but now a strong Douglas man, conferred with Richardson, was shown a telegram from the Illinois Senator who was in Washington, and the two agreed that the moment had come for action. Another ballot would be fatal, they believed, and they wanted Douglas to "end by a splendid retreat" rather than "perish by the secession of faithless adherents."⁴⁰ However, after Preston gained the platform to prepare the way for Richardson, pandemonium broke out over the hall when he spoke about ending a "useless contest." There were loud shouts of "No," but Richardson replaced Preston and read the telegram. Douglas took the ground that the majority should rule. A candidate receiving and maintaining a majority, should be given the nomination. The Convention then rushed unanimously to the Squire of Lancaster, three cheers were given, delegates jumped to their chairs—Old Buck had it at last.

³⁹ *Cincinnati Gazette*, June 3, 5, 1856.

⁴⁰ William Preston to Douglas, *Cincinnati*, June 7, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

Had Bright played fairly with Douglas, or had he, at the end, given way to the popular demand of the Democratic masses of Indiana, the result might have been different. The control of the Indiana delegates by Bright and the defection of Tennessee on the fifteenth ballot were the decisive factors in the defeat of Douglas, but it must be remembered that the Indiana boss played his powerful hand long before the Tennesseans threw down the Douglas standard. On their return from the Convention, the disappointed Douglas men of Illinois made it a point to shout for Buchanan at every Indiana station where the train stopped. To their surprise the people at the stations shouted back at them: "Damn Buchanan, hurrah for Douglas." The people were still for the Little Giant.⁴¹ In 1860 they were to win a great victory over Bright and his machine.⁴²

⁴¹ Isaac R. Dier to Douglas, Springfield, Ill., June 10, 1856 (Douglas Mss.).

⁴² The animosity of Indiana Democrats against Bright did not abate but increased. By 1860 they were ready for revolt. In the state convention of that year, which was held in January, Bright was deposed and the conditions of 1856 were reversed. A delegation instructed for Douglas went to the Charleston Convention. The following are among the Democrats of Indiana who wrote letters to Douglas about the Indiana convention of January 1860: Winslow Pierce, Ezra Read, Austin H. Brown, E. M. Miller, W. W. Wick, Norman Eddy, Indianapolis, Jan. 7, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16; A. T. Ham, Columbus, Ind., Jan. 13, Ezra Read, Terre Haute, Ind., April 2 (all found in Douglas Mss. and written in 1860). In a letter to John G. Davis, an Indiana supporter of Douglas who held a seat in the national House, A.M. Puett of Greencastle, Ind., writing Jan. 15, 1860, said: "John, we had a noble band of good men . . . everything was done that could be done by the administration that same old coon Jesse [Senator Bright] come here on Monday [Jan. 9] & one F. Bigger the syrene [siren] cry then commenced 'Harmony' Harmony was all they cared for & they said that could be had they insisted on us taking all the candidates [and] all the delegates. But—But not instruct this we could not obey & on Tuesday evening some one discovered the State of Indiana entirely out of Jesse's Breaches Pocket and in the Masonic Hall declaring its Indip [independence]" (Davis Mss.).