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JOHN H. REAGAN: UNIONIST OR SECESSIONIST?

by Philip J. Avillo, Jr.

Studies of Texas secession have concluded that Texans voted overwhelmingly in favor of withdrawal from the Union in 1861.¹ Yet, students of Texas during the Civil War era have also contended that strong signs of Unionist sentiment existed in the state until the very eve of secession.

For example, one historian has interpreted Sam Houston's strong victory in the Texas gubernatorial election in 1859 as clear testimony of this Union sentiment and the election of Andrew J. Hamilton to the United States House of Representatives from the western Texas district in that same year has been similarly interpreted. John H. Reagan, elected along with Hamilton to the House of Representatives, has also received recognition as a true Unionist in ante-bellum Texas.²

When Texas finally seceded, however, Houston's opposition proved less than forceful, Hamilton served in the newly elected Texas legislature, and Reagan withdrew from Congress before his state seceded. Where had all this Unionist fervor gone? A study of John H. Reagan during the years 1857-1861 strongly suggests that, in one instance, this Unionism never existed.

Born in Tennessee in 1818, Reagan epitomized the American ideal of the self-made man. At the age of sixteen, although he remained in Tennessee, Reagan left home to seek his fortune. For the next four years he supported himself through various jobs and pursued an education in his spare time. In 1838 Reagan ventured to the newly created Republic of Texas, where for the next several years he worked at different times as a surveyor, farmer, and teacher. Dissatisfied with these occupations, Reagan began to study law in 1846, and one year later plunged into politics.

In his first campaign, Reagan won a seat in the Texas House as a representative for the eastern Texas district of Nacogdoches. Although defeated two years later in 1849 when he ran for the state Senate, Reagan had launched a public career which would last until 1903 and include service as a United States Congressman, Postmaster-General of the Confederate States of America, post-Civil War leader of the Democratic Party in Texas, and Texas's first Railroad Commissioner.

More important for the purposes of this study, during those first two years in office Reagan expressed his sentiments toward the national issues of slavery, slavery expansion, and the rights of the South. For Reagan, they all went together. To challenge the existence of slavery or to prohibit the expansion of this institution meant to violate the rights of the South. In response to recent attacks upon slavery expansion, including the Wilmot Proviso of 1846, Reagan drafted a resolution, subsequently adopted by the Texas legislature, which defended territorial slavery as a constitutional right. A decade later, while a member of the United States House of Representatives, Reagan used this same constitutional argument to explain why he would follow the path of Southern secession.³

Reagan's personal defense of his action has served as proof that he actually possessed true Unionist feeling, his defection from the Union notwithstanding. In his *Memoirs*, written in 1903, Reagan insisted that as a member of the House of Representatives in the 35th and 36th Congresses, he struggled to maintain the Union.⁴ Many of his ante-bellum contemporaries accepted this estimate and generally referred to him as a man of high principle anxious to serve Texas and the United States. A member of the Texas legislature who later opposed secession, James W. Throckmorton, described Reagan as a man "who

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will give proper warning when danger, from whatever quarter, either North or South, threatens—who will keep us marching to the music of the Union . . . instead of one who would be throwing firebrands, and endeavoring to tear . . . the Union apart. The *Dallas Herald*, a major Texas newspaper of the period, considered him a true patriot, “an able defender of . . . the Constitution and a Union loving statesman, . . .” while the *Tyler Reporter* viewed Reagan as an enemy of “the fire-eating disunionists.”⁵

Historians, too, have praised Reagan’s attachment to the Union before and after secession. Reagan’s most recent biographer eulogized the former Texas congressman and insisted that Reagan “loved and cherished the Union and stood ready to fight her battles.”⁶ Lierna Friend also placed Reagan in the Unionist camp and believed that “he and the Houston faction were agreed in devotion to the best interests of the country.”⁷ Even after Reagan had seceded, David M. Potter, in *Lincoln and His Party*, used Reagan as an example of the widespread Unionism in the South which Potter felt verified his thesis that “voluntary reconstruction” was possible until the time of the Sumter crisis.⁸

Throughout his public career, before and after the Civil War, Reagan always professed that he had directed his entire energies when in the Congress or at home in Texas toward the preservation of the Union. His actions and his words immediately preceding the Civil War, however, destroy this facade and portray the real John H. Reagan as a secessionist.

For a complete understanding of Reagan’s actions during his tenure in the House of Representatives, two words, southerner and Unionist, require definition. In 1928, Ulrich B. Phillips contended that in a diverse South, a unity among whites based upon a “common resolve indomitably maintained—that it shall be and remain a white man’s country” had always prevailed. This passion for white control raged so intensely that by 1850, the southern clamor for states’ rights “had come to mean racial security, self-determination by the whites whether in or out of the Union . . .” In a more recent essay, “Slavery and Race,” James McPherson has drawn the same conclusion as Phillips. To be distinctively southern, then, meant to be dedicated to the principle of white supremacy and the maintenance of a white dominated society in the South.⁹

In 1860, the term Unionist had different connotations throughout the United States. For example, southern Unionists demanded that the Federal Government provide protection for “southern rights,” such as the expansion of slavery into the territories. Only as long as the Union preserved these rights were Unionists in the South actually willing to remain a part of the United States.¹⁰ Phillips discovered many conditional Unionists in the ostensibly Pro-Union, Constitutional Union Party, for many of its southern members only supported a southern rights interpretation of the Constitution.¹¹ As long as southern rights, so aptly grouped by Phillips under the rubric white supremacy, were secure, many southerners preferred the Union. So acted John H. Reagan. A southerner first, he “remained devoted to the Union until the Republican Party obtained control of the government” and the South appeared doomed.¹²

As a freshman Congressman in the 35th Congress, 1857-1859, Reagan initially moved unobtrusively in the background. Not until controversy flared over the proposed Lecompton Constitution did Reagan offer his views of sectional controversy. The Lecompton Constitution provided for the entrance of Kansas into the Union as a slave state and, in Reagan’s view, would also have strengthened the national power of the existing slave states. Infuriated by the Republican Party’s opposition to the bill, Reagan declared that party “destructive of constitutional liberty. . . of the equality and sovereignty of the states, . . . of the rights of the people, and revolutionary in its character.” In the same speech, Reagan advocated a southern convention to discuss methods for protecting southern rights. Furthermore, he warned, if the Republicans from the North continued to trample on the constitutional rights of the South, the southern

states would move "to preserve their rights, their honor, their equality, and their independence, under a separate government." As early as 1858, the Texas Unionist had revealed the conditional character of his national sympathies.¹³

While northern Republican attitudes toward the slave states continued to anger Reagan throughout 1858, growing dissension within his own Democratic Party began to alarm him. Fearful that a disunited South would be unable to retain political control or equity with the non-slaveholding states in the North, Reagan reasoned that party strife endangered the entire structure of southern society. To avoid such a calamity, he urged his fellow Democrats "to surrender their private judgments to the conventions of the party," to bury their differences for the greater cause of southernism.¹⁴

To make his own constituents more aware of the danger which confronted Texas and the South, Reagan delivered numerous speeches throughout his district during the summer of 1858. Once Reagan indicated that the immediate threat came from the radicals within the Democratic Party. Men such as William L. Yancey of Alabama, who had formed a "League of United Southerners," had disrupted the party machinery and weakened the solidarity of the national Democracy. Why form splinter parties, Reagan asked? "The Democratic Party, on its present principles, is the best Southern rights party, and at the same time, the best Union party." Ironically, Reagan's opposition to radical southern views, while designed only to protect the southern way of life, superficially cried out, "the Union forever," and contributed greatly to the growth of the Reagan myth.¹⁵

For the next year, Reagan unhesitatingly voiced his opposition to radical goals. He opposed secession; he denounced renewal of the slave trade; and he objected to filibustering, such as William Walker's expedition into Nicaragua. Although in October, 1858, Reagan insisted that he "still looked to the Union as the . . . anchor of his hopes," a few months later he seriously qualified his position. Opposition to the slave trade and filibustering, Reagan proclaimed in April, 1859, did not mean that he "opposed the acquisition of any Southern Territory . . ." Rather, he heartily approved of the acquisition of other slave territory "both for the spread of our [southern] institutions and forms and principle of government." Moreover, Reagan believed that such additional territory "would strengthen the power of the slave states . . . to resist the sectional fanaticism which exists in the free states."¹⁶

By this time, Reagan, in common with many southerners, had come to equate "sectional fanaticism" in the North with abolitionism and abolition as the primary goal of the Republican Party. When discussing the causes of the Civil War in his *Memoirs*, Reagan wrote that "in 1856, the antislavery men were organized into a sectional political party."¹⁷ Two years before secession Reagan asserted that the control of the government by this "revolutionary and fanatical party," void of any "respect for the constitution," justified secession. Should political power fall into Republican hands, the Congressman urged "the states to fall back on their own sovereignty, and to resist the power of usurpation by every means necessary."¹⁸

Had the Republican Party actually been an abolition conspiracy, secession might have been a logical response for a slaveholding South to make to a Republican victory. Reagan, however, exaggerated the objectives of the Republican Party, and it was in this distortion of reality that he resembled Southern radicals more than moderate Unionists. Regrettably or not, devotion to slavery and "moderation" were fully reconcilable in 1860; extremism consisted in seeing abolition designs where none existed.¹⁹

In an analysis of Abraham Lincoln's political career, Richard Hofstadter wrote that in the "Northwest, the seat of Lincoln's strength . . . most of the white people . . . were in fact not only not abolitionists, but actually — and here is the core of matter—Negrophobes." Lincoln recognized this and in a speech delivered in Peoria, Illinois, the future Presi-

dent stated, "we want them [the Territories] for homes of free white people."²⁰ Allan Nevins concurred with Hofstadter's conclusion and wrote that after John Brown's raid in 1859 "the Republican Party was . . . widely misidentified with the abolitionists." Nevins also emphasized the northern desire to keep the Territories white as well as free, claiming that "Indiana, Illinois, and even Kansas were unwilling to take a single additional person of color."²¹ Maintenance of a uni-racial society in the North, then, not the containment of slavery or the abolition of slavery, was the real objective of the Republican Party. In this respect, the North and South shared the same goal. The South hoped to maintain white supremacy through the geographical expansion of slavery; the North, through the confinement of the Negro to the southern states. Along with William L. Yancey, R. B. Rhett, and other secessionists, Reagan had confused anti-Negro sentiment in the North with abolitionism, an objective far from the minds of most Republicans.

Although Reagan continued to advocate secession, his southern contemporaries still envisioned him as a "union loving statesman, who cares less for his personal advancement than he does for the good of the country."²² Others, Reagan complained, denounced his opposition to the renewal of African slave trade and filibustering. In his *Memoirs*, he stated that he had not planned to seek another term in Congress in 1859. Adverse press opinion, however, persuaded him to run for re-election primarily to impress a "sound political morality on the public mind."²³ In spite of his adverseries and his own fears of defeat, Reagan overwhelmed his opponent, states' rights advocate, Judge William B. Ochiltree, by a vote of 23,977 to 3,464.²⁴ This campaign, considered a battle between a southern Unionist and a southern radical, caught the attention of the rest of the nation. In Washington, D.C., the *National Intelligencer* described the contest as "warm," due to the fact that Reagan had "incurred the resentment of a portion of his political confederates" for his stand against the filibuster and the slave trade. For the *Intelligencer*, a Reagan victory could only mean the triumph of southern "moderation."²⁵

If Reagan himself believed that he "could scarcely hope to beat all the politicians and all the newspapers,"²⁶ and the *Intelligencer* thought he had alienated himself from many of his supporters, how did Reagan manage to win so easily? Many factors may have contributed to the victory but none more than Reagan's political acumen. Early in the campaign, Reagan emphasized the right of the South to secede if the "abolitionist" Republicans received control of the government, simply reaffirming a belief shared by most southerners. During this same period, the *Dallas Herald* announced that Reagan supported slavery and the domestic slave trade, another view shared in common with his constituents.²⁷ Even more enlightening than these factors is the Texas Democratic Party platform for the year 1859. As Reagan explained in his *Memoirs*, a resolution in support of the controversial slave trade and filibustering failed to gain the support of the convention.²⁸ Although a few politicians and newspapers may have opposed him, Reagan's platform deserted neither the Party line nor southern principles and virtually guaranteed his re-election.

His election to the House won, Reagan still expressed his political sentiments toward the Democratic Party and secession while at the same time condemning the split over the slave trade and filibustering which threatened the foundations of the Party within the South. Formation of a separate "Southern rights party on the one hand and a Union party on the other, as contradistinguished from the Democratic Party," Reagan said, could only bring about the fall of the Democracy at the hands of the "abolitionist" Republicans. That event, Reagan reiterated, would end hope for the preservation of the "constitution . . . or the rights of the South in the Union."²⁹

As the summer of 1859 drew to a close, many persons interpreted the election results in Texas as a sign of a rejuvenated national unity. The *National Intelligencer* wrote that

both the Republican and Democratic Parties appeared satisfied with the election of Sam Houston as governor of Texas. Moreover, Texas had sent two "Unionists," Andrew Hamilton and John H. Reagan to Congress. The combination of these three men in public office seemingly brightened the cause for conciliation between North and South.³⁰

Concurrently with these ostensible moderate gains in the South, however, there also appeared a strong movement in Texas for more radical representation in Washington. Louis T. Wigfall, a known secessionist, received favorable endorsement for election to the United States Senate seat, vacant because of J. P. Henderson's death. On August 31, the *Dallas Herald* reported that Wigfall possessed all the necessary characteristics of an admirable southerner. He had "defended the cherished principles of our party from aspersions of her enemies, and elevated the standard of pure States Rights democracy." On October 5, the same newspaper which had heartily endorsed the "moderate" Reagan for the House of Representatives viewed the mounting support for Wigfall by other newspapers as a "good omen, and as a sure sign that the clouds are leaving our political horizon, and dissensions are healing."³¹ In 1859, political dissension in Texas referred to a rift in the State Democratic Party. Unity may have returned to the Texas Democracy, but not necessarily Unionism. Wigfall, who advocated secession for the South in 1849, clearly believed it even more appropriate in 1859.

Two weeks later, on October 16, 1859, a turning point in North-South relations occurred. With a small band of men, the abolitionist John Brown raided the United States arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia. Though crushed almost immediately by Federal troops, Brown's action sent waves of terror through the South.³² Reported in the *Texas press* as an "abolition conspiracy, not a negro conspiracy,"³⁴ Brown's attack quickly came to symbolized the revolutionary aims of the Republican Party.

In Texas, repercussions were almost immediate as the legislature hurriedly elected Wigfall to the United States Senate. Texans rejoiced that the Democracy had finally mended its fences and considered Wigfall's election a "triumph . . . that will do more to unite the divisions and dissensions in the party than any event"³⁵ and thereby help save the South. Thus, in the opening session of the 36th Congress, Wigfall, an avowed secessionist, and Reagan, who had urged secession if northern abolitionists continued to threaten the South, represented Texas, a state determined to express its sovereign power.

By this time, besides viewing all Republicans as abolitionists, Reagan also considered them political opportunists. In their campaign speeches and public writings Reagan discovered that they only discussed "the abstract right of man to personal liberty." The more practical, realistic question, one which Reagan deemed crucial to an understanding of the South, the Negro's "fitness and capacity for civilization and self-government," failed to receive much Republican attention.³⁶ In the months ahead, Reagan hoped to make the Congress more aware of this pertinent issue.

Accordingly, with two years congressional experience behind him, Reagan confidently expressed his views on these subjects early in the first session of the 36th Congress. In the midst of a near violent contest for the post of Speaker of the House,³⁷ Reagan unleashed a vitriolic attack against the "abolitionist" Republican Party. He labeled the party subversive, accused it of advocating violent revolution, and of plotting the overthrow of the Constitution. His attack then continued with a defense of slavery. Negroes belonged in slavery, they benefited from slavery, and they enjoyed slavery. Negroes even loved their masters, Reagan stated, and if "an appeal were made to the negroes to rise against their masters in the South, . . . four-fifths of them would take up arms for their masters and in defense of their homes." Why, he wondered, did the Republican Party wish to destroy such a well-structured society?³⁸

Reagan had little difficulty in transferring his animosity for the Republicans toward their nominee for the Speaker of the House, John Sherman. This man, a representative

from Ohio, had endorsed the Hinton Helper pamphlet, *Impending Crisis of the South: How to Meet It*, which Reagan asserted advocated the immediate abolition of slavery and called for a general slave revolt. Sherman, Reagan concluded, had aligned himself with the radical forces which supported such revolutionary acts as those committed by John Brown. Reagan insisted that for the Union to survive, it must be a "Union under the Constitution," the very Constitution which Sherman jeopardized with his actions and words. Unless responsible men in the government decided to uphold the Constitution, to willingly protect and recognize the rights of the southern states, Reagan warned, the Union would soon crumble.³⁹

At the same time, Reagan professed his own intention to persist with efforts toward a compromise solution and described himself as a man who had consistently worked for sectional accord. In the speakership contest, for example, Reagan expressed his willingness to vote for any candidate, even an American Party member.⁴⁰ Reagan's intense anti-Republican feeling prevented a true compromise, however, for it caused Reagan to vote against Sherman and to ignore the Republican representative's public opposition "to any interference what ever by the people of the free States with the relations of master and slave in the slave States."⁴¹ Had Reagan looked more closely, he might have seen their basic agreement.

Pro-slavery sentiment, however, rather than anti-Republican feeling provided the real insight into Reagan's actions. In another speech to the House, Reagan described slavery as neither criminal nor immoral. "The real crime against reason and humanity," he concluded, would be to emancipate the Negroes. In a classic defense of slavery, Reagan described "the four million negroes in bondage in this country . . . better fed, better clothed, better protected from violence and wrong, better informed, more intelligent," than their counterparts elsewhere in the world. To free the Negro would be to destroy that ideal state. Besides, Reagan added, he found Negroes so incapable of self-government and survival that if emancipated "they would fall into such . . . idleness and vice as would render it necessary for the security of society, to exterminate the greater portion of the race." How much better, Reagan insisted, to elevate the Negro to a civilized level while at the same time permitting the "white race to develop a great and splendid civilization." With these words, Reagan removed the facade of his "Southern rights." White supremacy remained his goal and reflected his real opposition to the abolition of slavery.⁴²

On this same occasion, Reagan chastised his Republican colleagues once more, this time for their political hypocrisy. Did the northerners deny their claim to moral, intellectual, and physical superiority over the Negro, Reagan asked? Surely, he declared, northern politicians would "dare not acknowledge the Negro equal to themselves." Nor did he believe that they would consent to free southern Negroes "on the condition that they should be sent to live in the free States."⁴³

While Reagan argued his case for states' rights and the necessity for slavery before the House, pro-secessionist forces, outside the Congress gained strong momentum. As early as January, 1860, for example, the Alabama State Democratic Party adopted a platform asserting the right of an individual state to secede from the Union if the Federal Government violated or failed to protect its constitutional rights, rights which included the ability to carry slaves into all federal territories.⁴⁴

At the same time, the Texas Democratic Party machinery formulated its own highly racial, pro-slavery, pro-secessionist platform for the election of 1860. Like Reagan, the party members who attended the convention also assumed that the Republican Party strove to emancipate the Negro, condemned this northern infringement of southern rights, and reiterated the South's privilege to secede.⁴⁵

Besides drafting this party platform, the State Convention, which had met in early April, 1860, chose delegates for the Democratic National Convention scheduled for later that month in Charleston, South Carolina. Composed of "staunch champions of the slaveholders cause,"⁴⁶ these men agreed to vote as a unit at the convention. Should the Party gathering fail to adopt their demands for a strong states' rights platform before the selection of a presidential candidate, the Texas delegation agreed to bolt the proceedings.⁴⁷

As many southerners had expected, the National Convention failed to adopt the strong states' rights platform of the Alabama Democracy. Consequently, secessionist (fire-eating) delegates wasted little time. With the Alabama deputies in the lead, delegations from six other states, Mississippi, Louisiana, Florida, South Carolina, Arkansas, and Texas, left the convention. Unable to accomplish anything further, the remaining delegates adjourned on May 1 to reconvene in June in Baltimore. At this second meeting, the Party split once again. By the end of June, factious elements of the Democratic Party in Baltimore had nominated two candidates for President of the United States, Stephen Douglas and John C. Breckinridge. The newly formed Constitutional Union Party selected still another candidate, John Bell, while in Chicago, on May 18, the Republicans chose Abraham Lincoln to carry their standard.⁴⁸

As the election of 1860 approached, many Texans shared Wigfall's view that a Breckinridge victory appeared as "the last and only hope for the safety of the South, or the Union."⁴⁹ In major towns and cities of Texas, extremely radical secession groups, organized by the Knights of the Golden Circle, formed and actively planned for secession should Breckinridge lose the election, a predictable outcome.⁵⁰ The *Dallas Herald*, which also supported Breckinridge, wrote that to accept another man as President meant to surrender the rights of the South and its people to northern abolitionists.⁵¹

Reagan, too, reacted to the pressures which surrounded the coming election. Although he continued to describe himself as an advocate of compromise, Reagan's actions and words, as in the past, indicated otherwise. In an open letter to the Congressman, Judge George W. Paschal, leader of the Union Party in Texas, asked Reagan if he thought Lincoln's election would provide enough cause for secession or at least resistance to his inauguration. Reagan replied that he "still clung to every reasonable hope for the Union," but in the same letter advocated resistance if Lincoln won the election "by the best and most effective means which can be adopted by the states." Should they fail to secure a guarantee for slavery within the Union and its territories, then Reagan recommended secession.⁵² A week before the Presidential election, Reagan privately expressed his fear of a Lincoln victory, advocating in the event of such a catastrophe separation from the Union as quickly as possible.⁵³ By December, moreover, Reagan's secessionist aims had intensified so greatly that his Congressional colleague from Alabama, David Clopton, considered him among "the most advanced" who sought secession.⁵⁴

The split in the national Democratic ranks had little effect on the outcome of the election. Had either of the three candidates opposed to Lincoln, Douglas, Breckinridge, or Bell, captured all the states which Lincoln lost, their electoral vote would have still remained below the needed majority. Knowledge of who supported the losing candidates and what each one represented, however, can provide valuable insight into the real meaning of the election. Douglas, a Union man, and a northerner, opposed secession on any grounds. Bell, the Constitutional Unionist, received much of his support from southerners labeled "co-operationists" by Dwight Dumond, themselves states' rights men but at least not ardently secessionist. Breckinridge, on the other hand, had received his nomination from secessionist elements within the Democratic Party.⁵⁵

In Texas, only two of these candidates, Breckinridge and Bell, appeared on the ballot. Reagan, who throughout his political career had professed his loyalty to party and

country, supported the candidate of the secessionists, Breckinridge.⁵⁶ The Texas gubernatorial contest of 1859 had confronted Reagan with a similar issue. In that year, the Texas Democratic Party nominated an ardent secessionist, H. R. Runnels, for governor to oppose the Unionist candidate, Sam Houston. Although Reagan's biographer has noted that Reagan never actually supported Runnels, when forced to decide between "party loyalty . . . and the maintenance of his convictions," he chose party.⁵⁷ In reality, however, Reagan followed the dictates of his conscience in both cases. In 1859, he endorsed a party platform dedicated to the protection of southern rights; in 1860, he endorsed Breckinridge, a man who campaigned on a similar platform and who, Reagan believed, possessed the power to protect slavery in the South.

By January 15, 1861, hope for a settlement between the North and the South within the Union had faded from Reagan's public pronouncements. In a speech on the floor of the House, the Texas congressman warned his Republican colleagues that as a result of their failure to compromise, few southern states, if any, would remain in the Union after Lincoln's inauguration on March 4. Again he asserted that bondage provided the best possible life for the inferior blacks and urged the Republicans to consider the consequences of abolition. Would northerners, he asked, "accept negroes as freemen and citizens" in their states? A raucous, "No! No!," reverberated through the chamber as Reagan proceeded, "yet you demand of us to liberate them . . . to dissolve society and to break up social order, to ruin our commercial and political prospects for the future, and still to retain such an element among us." Past successes of their government had resulted, he reminded the House, because "none but the white race, who were capable of self-government, were enfranchised with the rights of freemen." The thought of Negro equality with the white race revolted Reagan. Such equality, he said, could only signal the death knell for the entire nation.⁵⁸

Even in the midst of this speech, his final message to the House, Reagan attempted to emphasize his past loyalty to the Union. The Union, he believed, still offered opportunity for southern society provided the "radical" Republicans abandoned their plot to destroy the South.⁵⁹ Although Reagan convinced his Texas contemporaries and most twentieth century students of Texas history of his Unionist stance, at least one of his Congressional colleagues, Republican representative Benjamin Stanton of Ohio, thought otherwise. In answer to Reagan's attack, Stanton charged Reagan with basing "his whole argument upon the idea that the Republican Party is seeking to interfere with the subject of slavery in the slaveholding states of this Union." This notion was absurd, Stanton claimed, stating that he knew of

no Republican who looks to the Republican organization as an organization designed, either directly or indirectly, now or in the future, presently or remotely, to interfere in the remotest degree with slavery in the states.

Puzzled that a man as "well-informed as the gentleman from Texas" equated Republicanism and abolitionism, Stanton urged Reagan and the South to reject such "existing delusions" and to work for national harmony.⁶⁰ Reagan, however, had closed his eyes to the truth as early as 1856. During his four years in Congress Reagan's words and actions, only "moderately" less shrill than the most ardent fire-eater's, had shown him more willing to secede than to understand.

NOTES

¹William J. Donnelly, "Conspiracy or Popular Movement: The Historiography of Southern Support for Secession," *North Carolina Historical Review*, XLII (Winter, 1965), 79; Ralph A. Wooster, *The Secession Conventions of the South* (New York, 1962), 133.

²Llerena Friend, *Sam Houston: The Great Designer* (Austin, 1954), 324-326; John L. Waller, *Colossal Hamilton of Texas: A Biography of Andrew Jackson Hamilton* (El Paso, 1968), 17-33; Ben H. Procter, *Not Without Honor: The Life of John H. Reagan* (Austin, 1962), 87-121.

³Procter, *John H. Reagan*, 3-121; John H. Reagan, *Memoirs: With Special Reference to Secession and the Civil War*, reprint edition (Austin, 1968), 52-53; U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe*, 35th and 36th Congresses.

Reagan, *Memoirs*, 62-82.

⁴Letter from James W. Throckmorton to Reagan, August 17, 1859, Reagan Papers, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas; *Dallas Herald*, April 27, 1859; clipping from the *Tyler Reporter*, April 20, 1859, Reagan Papers.

⁵Procter, *Not Without Honor*, 121.

⁶Friend, *Sam Houston*, 326.

⁷David M. Potter, *Lincoln and his Party in the Secession Crisis* (New Haven, 1942), 229-231.

⁸Ulrich B. Phillips, "The Central Theme of Southern History," *American Historical Review*, XXXIV (October, 1928), 31, 5; James McPherson, "Slavery and Race," *Perspectives in American History* III (1969), 460-473.

⁹D. A. Arnold, "The Ultimatum of Virginia Unionists: 'Security for Slavery or Disunion'," *Journal of Negro History*, XLVIII (April, 1963), 115-129.

¹⁰Phillips, "The Central Theme of Southern History," 39.

¹¹Reagan, *Memoirs*, 75.

¹²U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe*, 35th Congress, 1st Session, March 22, 1858, 1201-1202.

¹³Letter from John Reagan to John Marshall, chairman of the State Democratic Convention, July 31, 1858, in *Dallas Herald*, August 14, 1858.

¹⁴Speech, originally printed in the *Palestine Advocate*, August 13, 1858, reprinted in the *Dallas Herald*, September 8, 1858. See, also, *Dallas Herald*, August 14, 21, September 16, 1858.

¹⁵*Dallas Herald*, October 6, 1858, April 20, 1859.

¹⁶Reagan, *Memoirs*, 85-86.

¹⁷*Dallas Herald*, April 20, 27, 1859.

¹⁸In a recent article, William W. Freehling emphasized this point when he wrote that "as the crisis drew near, the dread of internal weakness helped make secessionists consider irrelevant all speculations about the degree to which Lincoln was antislavery."

In "The Editorial Revolution, Virginia and the Coming of the Civil War: A Review Essay," *Civil War History*, XVI (March, 1970), 71.

²⁰Richard Hofstadter, *The American Political Tradition* (New York, 1948), 112, 113.

²¹Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln: Prologue to Civil War, 1859-1861*, II (New York, 1951), 104, 469. See also, J. G. Randall and David Donald, *The Divided Union* (Boston, 1961), 78-126 and James A. Rawley, *Bleeding Kansas and the Coming of the Civil War* (Philadelphia, 1969).

²²Dallas *Herald*, April 20, 27, 1859.

²³Reagan, *Memoirs*, 73.

²⁴Dallas *Herald*, August 24, 1859.

²⁵National *Intelligencer*, August 1, 1859.

²⁶Reagan, *Memoirs*, 73.

²⁷Dallas *Herald*, April 20, 27, 1859.

²⁸For the complete text of the state Democratic Party platform, see, E. W. Winkler, *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas* (Austin, 1916), 77-80.

²⁹Speech by Reagan reprinted by the Dallas *Herald*, September 21, 1859.

³⁰National *Intelligencer*, August 13, 1859.

³¹Dallas *Herald*, August 31, October 5, 1859.

³²Clyde W. Lord, "Young Louis Wigfall: South Carolina Politician and Duelist," *The South Carolina Historical Magazine*, LIX (April, 1958), 96-112; Alvy L. King, "The Emergence of a Fire-Eater: Louis T. Wigfall," *Louisiana Studies*, VII (Spring, 1968), 73-82; and Beverly J. Seehorn, "Louis Trezvant Wigfall, A Confederate Senator," (unpublished Master's thesis, Southern Methodist University, 1930) call Wigfall an ardent secessionist.

³³For a good account of Brown's raid, see Allan Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln*, II, 70-97.

³⁴Dallas *Herald*, November 9, 1859.

³⁵Dallas *Herald*, January 4, 1860.

³⁶Reagan, *Memoirs*, pp. 85-86.

³⁷For a good account of that battle, see Ollinger Crenshaw, "The Speakership Contest of 1859-1860," *Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, XXIX (December, 1942), 323-338.

³⁸U.S. Congress, *Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 1st Session, January 4, 1860, 328.

³⁹*Congressional Globe*, *Ibid.*, 345.

⁴⁰*Congressional Globe*, *Ibid.*, 345.

⁴¹*Congressional Globe*, December 4, 1859, p. 21.

⁴²*Congressional Globe, Ibid.*, February 29, 1860, 927.

⁴³*Congressional Globe, Ibid.*, 925. For a recent study of racism in the ante-bellum North, see, Leon Litwack, *North of Slavery: The Negro in the Free States, 1790-1860*. (New York, 1961).

⁴⁴Dwight Dumond, *The Secession Movement, 1860-1861* (New York, 1933), 33-34. For the text of the Alabama Democratic Party platform, see, Dwight L. Dumond (ed.), *Southern Editorials on Secession*, reprint edition (Glouster, Mass., 1964), 516-517.

⁴⁵Winkler, *Platforms of Political Parties in Texas*, 83.

⁴⁶The Texas convention sent five states' rights men to Charleston, H. R. Runnels, F. R. Lubbock, Guy M. Bryan, R. B. Hubbard, and Tom Ochiltree. Rupert N. Richardson, *Texas the Lone Star State* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1963), 182.

⁴⁷Dumond, *The Secession Movement*, 34-35.

⁴⁸Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln*, II, 203-272; Dumond, *The Secession Movement*, 35-112.

⁴⁹Wigfall to John Marshall, *Texas Republican*, October, 20, 1860, in Seehorn, "Louis Trezvant Wigfall," 31.

⁵⁰Roy Sylvan Dunn, "The KGC in Texas, 1860-61," *Southwestern Historical Quarterly*, LXX (April, 1967), pp. 543-73.

⁵¹*Dallas Herald*, October 17, 1860.

⁵²*Dallas Herald*, October 31, 1860.

⁵³Reagan to O. M. Roberts, November 1, 1860, cited in Procter, *Not Without Honor*, 120, from the Roberts Papers, University of Texas Archives, Austin, Texas; Roberts to Reagan, November 25, 1860, in Reagan Paper, Texas State Archives, Austin, Texas.

⁵⁴David Clopton to C. C. Clay, Senator from Alabama, Dec. 13, 1860, in the C. C. Clay Papers, Duke University, Durham, North Carolina.

⁵⁵Lincoln received a total of 180 electoral votes. Breckinridge, Bell, and Douglas, combined, only received 123. Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln*, II, 313. For party composition, see Nevins, 200-228, 261-262, and Roy F. Nichols, *The Disruption of American Democracy* (New York, 1948), 312-326, 338-339, and Dumond, *The Secession Movement*, 22-34.

⁵⁶Breckinridge, however, never advocated secession. Rather, he sought conciliation within the Union. Nevins, *The Emergence of Lincoln*, II, 282-284, and Frank H. Heck, "John C. Breckinridge in the Crisis of 1860-1861," *Journal of Southern History*, XXI (August, 1955), 316-346.

⁵⁷Procter, *Not Without Honor*, 111.

⁵⁸*Congressional Globe*, 36th Congress, 2nd Session, January 15, 1861, 389-393.

⁵⁹*Congressional Globe, Ibid.*

⁶⁰*Congressional Globe, Ibid.*, Appendix, 57-61.