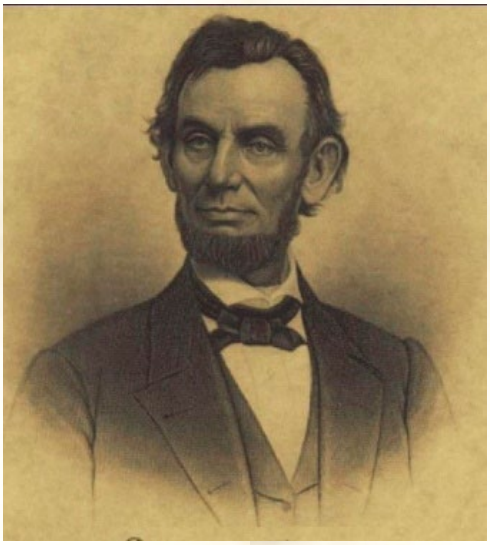
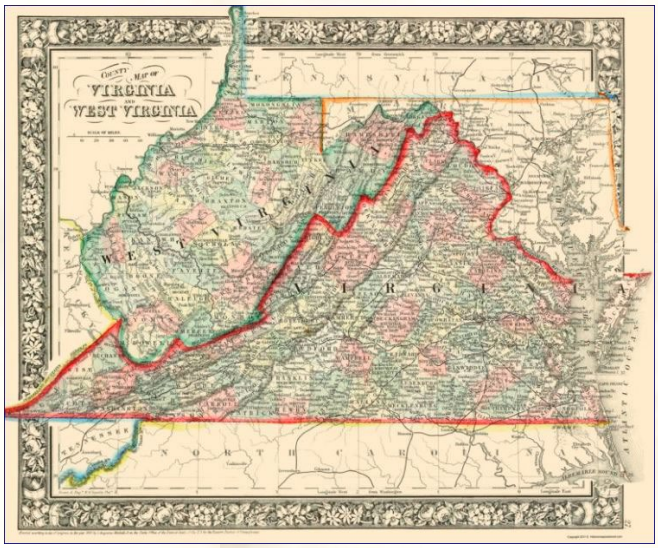
LINCOLN AND THE "VAST QUESTION" OF WEST VIRGINIA





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On New Year's Day in 1863 Lincoln produced two measures, seemingly contradictory despite a common purpose. The acts have since been the subject of considerable scholarly exploration and controversy. He then made known his conditional approval of the admission of West Virginia as a slave state, much to the chagrin of Charles Sumner and other antislavery Congressmen. He also promulgated the famous proclamation seeking to eliminate slavery in the seceded states. Designed essentially to expedite a successful conclusion of the Civil War, both were of doubtful constitutionality, and both were defended as war measures. Either measure could be construed as an act of desperation by the President. His dismal military and political failures thus far were enhancing the likelihood that the Confederates would be successful in their bid for independence.

Historians have thoroughly examined the Emancipation Proclamation. The origins, purposes, and results of the great proclamation, both in terms of domestic and foreign politics, have been well-established, while questions of constitutionality have been largely obviated by the Thirteenth Amendment of 1865. {1} However, the "vast question of West Virginia," as Lincoln's Senate confidant described it, has yet to be adequately explored and interpreted. As T. Harry Williams concludes, the formation of West Virginia remains clouded by an "aura of fantasy, almost of unreality," despite the appreciable contributions of recent studies. {2}

To place that wartime division of Virginia in an appropriate context for analysis, the policy of the Lincoln administration and its objectives in the western counties must be determined. Also requiring examination are the motives of those Union men west of the Alleghenies who supported the war efforts of Lincoln and, at the same time, lost no opportunity to promote the division of the state. Determining the extent to which slavery constituted a major obstacle to the new state movement will mark the limits of this inquiry.

The military significance of present West Virginia {3}, imaginary as well as real, was the cornerstone of Lincoln's policy until the tide of war shifted at Gettysburg clearly in favor of the Union. That area was viewed initially as a route by which Union armies could strike deep into the Confederacy to sever the vital east-west transportation system of the South. While federal success in western Virginia

would encourage wavering border states to remain in the Union, control of those counties would provide a buffer to protect Ohio and western Pennsylvania from Confederate penetration. Completed to Wheeling in 1853, with an auxiliary line extended from Grafton to Parkersburg, the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad lay mostly in West Virginia and formed a vital system connecting St. Louis and the west to Washington and the east. {4}

Lincoln moved promptly and decisively to contest Confederate control of western Virginia when Virginia adopted an ordinance of secession on April 17, 1861. Within three weeks federal actions clearly indicated that the area was off limits for Confederates. Arms and ammunition were rushed to those Union men to aid in the formation of militia units, some of which were promptly mustered into federal service, as western Virginia was opened to federal recruiters. Promptly exempting the area from the blockade, Lincoln restored western Virginia's economic activities with the neighboring states of Ohio and Pennsylvania. Special provisions were made to continue federal mail delivery there, a service discontinued elsewhere in Virginia and the Confederacy. Lincoln clearly signalled his intentions when on May 9, 1861, most of the present state was incorporated into the recently formed military department which included Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois, and was commanded by General George B. McClellan. {5}

In another seven weeks the Confederate military positions in the Trans-Allegheny counties were virtually destroyed. When they launched a minor offensive with a major objective, the severing of the Baltimore and Ohio near Fairmont, McClellan moved with administration approval to drive the Confederates from the area. By his decisive and well-publicized campaign culminating at Rich Mountain on July 11, 1861, McClellan left in shambles their network of positions in West Virginia. Thus, a week before First Manassas, the Lincoln administration made West Virginia safe for Union sympathies. The apparent easy success of McClellan encouraged the execution of plans to attack the Confederates at Manassas Junction, secured his appointment to command the eastern federal army, and paved the way for his ultimate role as Lincoln's Democratic opponent in the presidential election of 1864. {6}

As McClellan moved on Rich Mountain, Lincoln announced to the first session of the wartime Congress his recognition of a Union state government at Wheeling.

With the cooperation of Lincoln, his cabinet, McClellan, key Congressmen, and officials of Ohio and Pennsylvania, West Virginians established the "Restored Government" at Wheeling after Virginians by referendum ratified the secession ordinance. Heeding Lincoln's July 4 advice, the Thirty-seventh Congress admitted to the House and Senate those elected by the Wheeling regiment to represent Virginia. Congress thereby officially recognized the Union government of seceded Virginia. Thus, as western Virginia was being secured militarily, the administration placed the reins of state government in the hands of Union men.

There is little room for question regarding Lincoln's plans for the Wheeling government. This was a pilot state of reconstruction, a point made clear by his Attorney General on August 12, 1861. {7} As federal armies secured sections of Virginia, the Wheeling government would replace Confederate local officials with those of Union sympathies. {8} In six months much of the Trans-Allegheny was placed under the jurisdiction of the Restored Government. The Wheeling experiment also encouraged Union men in other seceded states to establish Union state governments "a la West Virginia." {9} The high point of success for the Restored Government came when Lincoln attempted to establish its control of eastern Virginia by co-ordinating its activities with those of McClellan's abortive Peninsular Campaign. {10} The Restored Government failed because McClellan failed. To an even greater extent, Lincoln's reconstruction plan for Virginia failed because he was unable to restrain the statehood ambitions of West Virginians.

Lincoln did not err when he referred to the formation of West Virginia as "secession" from the Old Dominion. The division of Virginia is attributable to the insecurity of western Virginians, a conviction that the Confederate government which exercised jurisdiction over them did not protect their vital interests. The same factors account for the secession of the Southern states. Lincoln's election caused Southerns to conclude that the vital interests of the slave states would not be secured by remaining in the Union and under the jurisdiction of the central government at Washington. By placing the power of the presidency in the hands of the Republican Party while for three decades southern power in Congress had been declining, the 1860 election results seemed to presage a major national government assault on slavery. Lincoln was expected to employ patronage to establish his party in the Southern states, an agency which would serve as the nucleus of antislavery activity. A Southern Republican organization

would undermine slavery, the basis of the economic and social system, and would challenge the virtual monopoly of power enjoyed by the Democratic Party in the South. The wartime experience in western Virginia seems to suggest that, however the results may be justified, those Southern apprehensions were not without a basis in fact. {11}

Nor did Lincoln err when in March 1861, he warned the Confederate leaders at Montgomery, Alabama, that the principles of secession would bring about the disintegration of their proposed nation. If they accepted the notion that political separation is the logical solution to a conflict of interests North and South, what, he asked, would prevent a portion of the Confederacy, whose interests were not identical with those of the new nation, from seceding "a year or two hence?" {12} If the admission of West Virginia to the Union on June 20, 1863, can appropriately be viewed as secession from Virginia and the Confederacy, Lincoln's warning assumes a prophetic aura. The division of Virginia was, in the final analysis, the result of West Virginians recognizing a basic conflict between their vital interests and those of eastern Virginia and the Confederacy.

Lincoln quickly realized, moreover, that the interests of the Union men in western Virginia were not identical with those of his administration. Their ambition to form a new state was a major obstacle to his restoring Virginia to the Union. Opponents of statehood warned Lincoln, and events were to prove them correct, that division would discredit and destroy the Restored Government, i.e., his reconstruction program in Virginia. That division would have adverse effects on other seceded states in which he had encouraged the establishment of regimes similar to that at Wheeling. {13} In that the new states would include most of Virginia under Union control, the Restored Government would have little territory to govern. In those eastern Virginia counties held by Union troops, the Restored Government would find its authority challenged by army commanders. The resolution of the Richmond state legislature that the state would not "yield one inch of its territory," {14} suggested that division would give Virginia a greater incentive to continue the war. Division, then, would make the Old Dominion far less likely to accept restoration to the Union.

If statehood proved a threat to his reconstruction plans, Lincoln could not be sure that the majority of West Virginians supported division. When the bill was placed on his desk, he was aware that there was far less support for statehood than there had been a year earlier. Lincoln apparently had promoted that

opposition to statehood among western Virginians, as far as political expediency would permit. The problem of determining the degree to which opposition developed within the proposed state is one of determining public opinion, an art as yet to be perfected by today's professional pollsters and one which the historian finds baffling when trying to determine questions of a century past. Lincoln was poorly prepared to gauge public sentiment. Historians conclude, for example, that Lincoln was wrong in interpreting the results of a February 1861, election to mean that Virginians were firmly opposed to secession. They were pro-Union, generally speaking, on April 11, 1861; but they were not on April 13, 1861, when news arrived of Lincoln's attempt to provision Fort Sumter. {15} Perhaps most West Virginians wanted separation in May 1861, but it is readily apparent that the slavery issue, the offensive behavior of federal troops in western Virginia, the animosities generated by sectional conflicts within the proposed state, and the threat of a Republican conquest of a Democratic state caused countless numbers to desert the statehood movement.

When the statehood bill was introduced in Congress, its advocates clearly perceived that events in the past year had caused considerable numbers to desert the cause. Perhaps Democrats and Whigs saw the realization of Southern apprehensions when the White House attempted to fix Republican control over the proposed new state. The Southern fears might indeed be realized in the proposed new state in a manner similar to that which was to take place in other southern states during the postwar years. Resentment of the increasing influence of antislavery Republicans in the statehood movement distressed many West Virginians. The one-time Know-Nothing and Democrat representing the Restored Government in the U.S. Senate, John S. Carlile of Clarksburg had been the Carnot of western Virginia, the "organizer of victory," the recognized leader of resistance to the Confederates and the original spokesman of the statehood movement. Yet, in June 1862, Carlile attempted to scuttle the statehood movement; thereafter, he continued to oppose the division of Virginia. Perhaps the success of Republican antislavery men in seizing control of the proposed new state alienated Carlile. When that faction obtained the support of their Congressional counterparts to override the decision of the Wheeling state constitutional convention respecting slavery in the new state, Carlile was convinced that statehood was not desirable at that time and on these terms. {16}

Diminution of support for the statehood movement was widely recognized in the Trans-Allegheny long before the statehood bill was introduced in Congress. While everyone at the beginning of the war had been "wild for the new state," as Willey was reminded by Harrison Hagans, a prominent Preston County businessman, there no longer existed that "burning zeal that inspired the great lights of a year ago." {17} The basic differences between the northern and southern sections of the new state, respecting primarily the issues of slavery and internal improvements, account in part for that loss of zeal. When the constitutional convention met in Wheeling to devise an instrument of government for the new state, the heated debates on those two issues almost destroyed the movement.

In the Virginia Assembly delegates from the northern counties had opposed the efforts of their southern colleagues in 1855 and 1856 to persuade the Virginia Assembly to construct a railroad to serve the Kanawha Valley. With the Baltimore and Ohio serving the northern counties and constructed at no expense to Virginia, the northern counties refused to be taxed for the construction of the Kanawha Valley railroad. In the 1861 Wheeling constitutional convention the Valley delegates were infuriated when the northern delegates continued to reject their proposals to construct such a railroad at the expense of the proposed new state. Whey should not the Kanawha Valley remain in Virginia to obtain the railroad which the assembly had authorized months before the war, and to profit by providing the Confederacy with salt, a desperately needed item and a principal industry in the valley? Charles Ambler was correct in concluding that the new state might never have come about had Virginia provided a railroad for the valley before the war. {18} He might well have added that those counties certainly would not have been represented at Wheeling if they had had their railroad. The decline of interest in the statehood movement, then, is attributable in part to this sectional conflict within the proposed state.

The decisive influence of the slavery issue was in part responsible for the division of the Union in 1860-1861, i.e., the issue promoted separatist sentiment which led to the secession of the South. Far from contributing to the wartime division of the Old Dominion, the slavery issue proved to be a major obstacle to the "secession" of the western counties from Virginia and the Confederacy. It is clear that when the statehood movement approached the final stage, the intrusion of the slavery issue was viewed as the "opening of Pandora's Box", as a Morgantown

delegate put it, and the beginning of troubles for the architects of division. The Methodist-sponsored resolution to provide for the emancipation of slaves prompted the constitutional convention delegates representing the area from "Harrison [County] to the Kentucky line" to threaten to bolt the convention. When Willey and Carlile exerted their influence to suppress the resolution, the convention proceeded to insert an innocuous antislavery provision in the new state constitution {19} The conservative Democratic and Whig businessmen dominating the statehood movement recognized the rapid decline of slavery in the new state. While not seeking to perpetuate it, they hoped to avoid the explosive and divisive issue. They failed, however, to see the implications for the statehood movement of the rapidly developing antislavery temper for the North. Nor did they recognize the strength of the antislavery delegates who had the support of their counterparts in Congress and in Lincoln's cabinet.

In view of the growing antislavery sentiment expressed by several measures of Congress, and clearly reflected by the President's oblique attack on slavery in his proposed compensated emancipation program, West Virginians should have realized the folly of hoping to get Congress and the President to approve the admission of another slave state. Moreover, a minority represented in the convention apparently did not want statehood if slavery were not abolished. These antislavery men clearly recognized that little support would develop in Washington unless the state was presented as an assault on slavery. They tried to convince Congress and the President that the pro-slavery speeches of Willey and Carlile did not represent the sentiments of West Virginians. A.W. Campbell used the Wheeling *Intelligencer* to wage a propaganda campaign to convince Washington that slavery was the primary cause of the statehood movement, thereby creating a myth that historians have been inclined to perpetuate. {20}

Key Congressmen were enlisted by the antislavery delegates to require the new state to abolish slavery as a condition for admission. Senator B. F. Wade of Ohio, chairman of the Committee on Territories, proved to be an invaluable ally. He did not, of course, entertain the popular sovereignty notions of Stephen A. Douglas, his Democratic predecessor as the committee chairman who maintained that the people, not Congress, should decide whether their state would be slave or free. Treasury Secretary Chase, the outspoken foe of slavery and the leading challenger to Lincoln's leadership within the party, and John A. Bingham, a protege of Joshua Giddings to whom Ambler refers as the "guiding

genius" of the bill in the House, were also prominent Ohio allies of the antislavery West Virginians. {21} They succeeded in securing Senate approval in July 1862 of a requirement that the new state constitution provide for the gradual emancipation of slaves. {22}

Some of the antislavery Congressmen could accept no compromise which would admit a slave state to the Union. In the Senate Charles Sumner refused to support the bill, scornfully dismissing Harrison Hagans' plea that he accept the gradual emancipation compromise provision. When the bill was considered in the House of Representatives, the timely intervention of Pennsylvania Governor Andrew Curtin rescued the new state from oblivion when he thwarted Thaddeus Stevens' attempt to insert in the bill a provision for immediate emancipation. Had Stevens succeeded, the new state constitution so revised would have met certain defeat when submitted for the approval of the proposed new state. Such an event would have spelled the end of the wartime movement to divide Virginia. Since the November elections had removed from office a number of Republicans, including Mr. Bingham, House approval of statehood in December 1862, came in a "lame duck" session. The new Congress was not likely to approve division. {23}

Congressional dictation of gradual emancipation placed an almost intolerable strain on the most ardent statehood advocates. The reactions of Judge George W. Summers of Charleston, Willey, and Van Winkle, suggest that the decline in support for the new state was in large measure due to the slavery issue. Most, but by no means all, West Virginians found statehood desirable even on those terms. A Chief Whig spokesman for the Restored Government in the Kanawha Valley, Summers concluded that the bill might well be deferred for consideration by a more moderate Congress. Willey entertained similar views. Largely responsible for the initial effort to divide Virginia, Carlile opposed the movement altogether, while insisting that he would support statehood were Congress to withdraw its conditions for admission. More representative of West Virginia sentiment, and perhaps the most influential of all statehood advocates, Van Winkle refused to go to Washington to lobby for the bill and privately threatened to refuse to give any support publicly to the statehood cause. His immediate response to Congressional dictation was temporarily to desert the new state cause {24}

Charles G. Sellers has demonstrated that to Southern Whigs economic development was far more important than State's rights principles {24} The reactions of West Virginians to Congressional dictation support his thesis. Van Winkle could hardly suppress his resentment of those "animals in Ohio, and Brooke, and perhaps in Preston Counties," that "Wheeling *Intelligencer* clique," whom he held responsible for bringing about Congressional dictation. To Van Winkle the Congressional requirement of gradual emancipation was a deplorable violation of States' rights, an especially outrageous act "by those [Republicans] whose platform binds them not to interfere with state institutions." {26} He was ultimately convinced, nevertheless, that the economic advantages promised by statehood made imperative his acceptance of Congressional dictation. Despite his contempt for the zealous antislavery men and his discomfort in cooperating with Mr. Bingham, who stumped the state to promote acceptance of the revised constitution, Van Winkle continued to lead the statehood movement. The facts of political economy were clearly perceived by Methodist minister James Drummonds, who predicted that West Virginians would embrace statehood if they realized that "their immediate pecuniary interests will be promoted by voting for the new state." {27}

Typical of most of his contemporaries in the western counties, Van Winkle remained devoted to the new state cause, while he detested the antislavery Congressmen's proclivity to ride roughshod over States' rights, a view which a century ago was the rule, and not the exception. Nor could the most outspoken West Virginia Unionists easily accept the practice of federal commanders and the Republican state government to suppress Democratic newspapers on the pretense that criticism of the administration's wartime policies was an offense approaching disloyalty, {28} a practice not entirely unfamiliar on the American scene a century later. Nevertheless, separation from Confederate Virginia had its advantages. Those leaders who supported the Union Cause in Virginia realized that the last shot of the Civil War would mark the close of their political careers. The postwar experience of Congressman Joseph Segar, an eastern Virginia Unionist, suggests that their apprehensions were not without basis in fact.{29} Nevertheless, the desire to secure the opportunity for economic development remained the leitmotif of the statehood advocates.

The role of economic factors in the statehood movement is to be placed in proper perspective only by considering the controversies between eastern and western

sections of antebellum Virginia. Until 1850 western Virginians were convinced that their interests were being consistently sacrificed to those of the counties east of the Alleghenies. To a Wirt County audience in 1847, Van Vinkle compared eastern Virginia's neglect of the western counties to the English control and exploitation of Ireland. The eastern-dominated state legislature neglected the economic development of the western section, he maintained, because it was to the advantage of the Tidewater and Piedmont sections. {30} Discontent in the western counties, however, was virtually eliminated in the decade preceding the war. The 1850 state constitution satisfied western demands for greater representation in the assembly. The Baltimore and Ohio was permitted to extend its lines to Wheeling and Parkersburg, while on the eve of the war the assembly provided for the construction of a railroad at state expense to serve the Kanawha Valley. Western leaders played a greater role in state politics in the 1850's. Clarksburg provided a Democratic governor, Morgantown a Whig candidate for lieutenant governor, while Lewisburg provided a lieutenant governor for Virginia after the war began. {31} There is little reason to believe that any appreciable separatist sentiment existed in 1860 in those counties west of the Alleghenies.

But the Civil War came. In terms of reviving friction between eastern and western Virginians, the war had the effect of turning the clock to 1830. The failure of Virginia to provide adequate defenses for the western counties, the attack on the Baltimore and Ohio near Fairmont in May 1861, the far more devastating and paralyzing destruction of the railroad by Stonewall Jackson at Harpers Ferry and Virginia's cancellation of the Kanawha Valley Railroad, convinced western Virginians that Richmond was still inclined to sacrifice their vital interests. Moreover, Governor John Letcher made it clear that Virginia would continue to punish the Baltimore and Ohio for its decision to support the Union. Little wonder that West Virginians ignored his promise to satisfy all their demands if they would support the Confederacy. {32}

The Confederate treatment of the Baltimore and Ohio proved to be a great aid to the statehood cause. If West Virginians accepted Congressional dictation to make a case for statehood with zealous opponents of slavery in Congress and with Secretary Chase and the President, they had no difficulty with War Secretary Edwin Stanton, a Democrat who formerly practiced law in Steubenville, Ohio, near the center of statehood activities, and who was well-

known to many new state advocates. When this friend of the Baltimore and Ohio replaced the promoter of the Pennsylvania Railroad, Simon Cameron, in the War Department in 1862, statehood prospects brightened greatly. Stanton proved to be a loyal agent of the West Virginia independence movement. {33} No coincidence was the addition of the "eastern panhandle" counties to the new state: the Baltimore and Ohio thereafter lay entirely in Maryland and West Virginia, securely beyond the reach of a potentially vindictive Old Dominion.

Wars and revolutions are commonly known to produce wholly unpredictable results. Lincoln's revolutionary experiment in Virginia proved to be no exception to the rule. Having promoted the Wheeling government and helped to clothe it with legal authority, he continued after Appomattox to defend the Restored Government as a means of restoring Virginia to the Union. In doing so, he served West Virginia's statehood purposes, which were basically in conflict with his reconstruction aims. Recognizing the statehood movement as a threat to his reconstruction plans, he tried to check it. When a Wheeling convention, held spellbound by Carlile, was prepared to divide the state in May 1861, an administration agent intervened to persuade the West Virginians to embrace instead the cause of the Union state government. Three months later, Lincoln's Attorney General delivered to statehood advocates an administration caveat, the meaning of which was not subject to misinterpretation. In Congress the President's friend, Orville H. Browning, tried to forestall the movement. {34} Nevertheless, West Virginians proceeded to use the Restored Government for statehood purposes. Control of the Restored Government permitted them in May 1862, to obtain technically the permission of the Virginia legislature (the Wheeling Assembly), as required by the federal constitution, to form the new state. Lincoln was distressed by the ultimate Congressional approval of the act, but when the act was placed officially on his desk, he had no real choice. Having enlisted the support of his most powerful critics in Congress and in his cabinet, West Virginians held the trump cards. And he knew it.

Two developments in December 1862, dictated Lincoln's decision to approve the admission of West Virginia, although neither took place in the proposed new state. Lincoln's armies were again crushed, and his leadership was seriously challenged by a Congressional revolt designed to give his Treasury Secretary the power of a prime minister. The devastating repulse of the federals at Fredericksburg shook the nation and deepened the pall of gloom already

prevalent in Washington. That fiasco closed the second year of the war, with the Confederates having humiliated Lincoln's armies in four of the five major campaigns in the eastern theater.

Fredericksburg gave form and substance to the apparitions which were to continue to haunt Lincoln for another six months. The Union defeat revived the prospects of foreign intervention, the primary goal of Confederate diplomacy. It made far more ominous a threatened disintegration of the Union, posed by the move to create a northwestern confederacy, the type dissolution which Lincoln had predicted for the Confederacy. That disaster raised serious questions about his ability to conduct the war and prompted zealous Congressmen of his own party to demand that Lincoln relinquish his power to them and their man in his cabinet, Salmon P. Chase. A month earlier the midterm elections embarrassed Lincoln, Fredericksburg left him unable to "see a ray of hope." Perhaps, as he told Browning, the Almighty intended to give the ultimate victory to the Confederates. {35}

Fredericksburg, and Lincoln's response to it, suggest that Lincoln differed with "radicals" only in terms of timing and expediency. He was as determined as the most zealous of the radicals to win the war, but he repudiated their approach and proposed timing of action. He disliked slavery as much as did Charles Sumner, Thaddeus Stevens, or any of the abolitionists. But he would not sacrifice the Union and the Constitution to destroy slavery. He waited until the appropriate time to act. He would not jeopardize his war program by his actions respecting the division of Virginia. Fredericksburg, however, had the effect of convincing Lincoln that the time and circumstances required his accepting the views of most radicals on the West Virginia question.

Congressional debates on the statehood bill clearly reflect a vindictive attitude of the radicals toward Virginia. They also contained the fundamental arguments in favor of destroying the inhumane institution of slavery. That revulsion against slavery and a vindictive attitude toward the South were characteristic of those designated as "radicals." {36} Those Oliver Cromwells of the Civil War were, in effect, too human to rise to the level of Lincoln's statesmanship. If the Confederates had punished the Union at First and Second Manassas and the Peninsular Campaign, and if they had embarrassed the Union at Antietam, the radicals could punish Virginia in Congress, if not on the battlefields. They could forever reduce the size and influence of Virginia by supporting the movement to

give independence to those western Virginians. {37} If the conservative States' rights men of the statehood movement had attempted to avoid the slavery issue, at least they were generally agreeable to the gradual emancipation of slaves. Virginia was winning the war in the field but, in terms of her territory, she was losing the war in Congress. Fredericksburg apparently destroyed Virginia's case with the President.

Lincoln wished to defer the question of a division of Virginia. He apparently preferred to keep his campaign promises, and those of his party, to avoid interference with slavery in states where it existed. He did not feel that he had the power to abolish slavery which was protected by the Constitution. He had grave doubts about the constitutionality of the proposed new state. But the war forced him to act in both cases. Months earlier when he was in a far stronger position, he had felt it expedient to give a new Wheeling command to the fallen hero of the radicals, John C. Fremont, whom the President had fired because of his refusal to accept the slavery policy of his commander in chief. Fredericksburg strengthened the hand of the radicals and left Lincoln defenseless. While he managed to prevent the Republican extremists from seizing control of the presidency, he found it inexpedient to challenge them further by rejecting the statehood movement. He could be evasive in discussing statehood with John S. Bingham after Fredericksburg, {38} but he could not openly challenge the zealots of his own party by rejecting that act which, almost without exception, had the ardent support of the radicals.

In the final analysis, Lincoln approved West Virginia statehood for the same reasons which prompted him to issue the great proclamation. His views toward both questions were determined by the same basic consideration -- he would employ every means available, even if it meant stretching the Constitution much farther than Alexander Hamilton or John Marshall ever dreamed possible, and farther than James C. Randall considered permissible, in order to win the war, to preserve the Union and the Constitution. If such semantic interpolation does not constitution an injustice to historical accuracy, one might paraphrase Lincoln's reply to the "Prayer of Twenty Millions," Horace Greeley's untimely demand for the immediate emancipation of the slaves, in order to make clear Lincoln's approach to the question of West Virginia.

Perceiving more clearly than his contemporaries the importance of timing in dealing with crucial questions of national import, Lincoln would say:

> I would save the Union. I would save it the shortest way under the Constitution... My paramount object in this struggle is to save the Union, and it is not either to save or to destroy [the new state]... If I could save the Union without [acting on the statehood question], I would do it.... What I do about [the division of Virginia], I do because I believe it helps to have the Union, and what I forbear, I forbear because I do not believe it would help save the Union... I shall try to correct errors when shown to be errors; and I shall adopt new views so fast as they shall appear to be true views. {39}

With perfect timing, Lincoln issued the preliminary emancipation proclamation four weeks after his reply to Greeley. Because the time required him to do so, he approved the statehood bill.

To Lincoln the problem was that of determining the expediency of approving statehood, in a sense, that of reconciling national interests with those of West Virginians who, by virtue of his military failures, seemed to represent a balance of power in the nation. As he found it expedient in September 1862, to defer to the wishes of West Virginians by excluding the new state from the provisions of the preliminary emancipation proclamation, Fredericksburg made expedient his approving and defending the act to admit the new state. To underscore the obvious, Lincoln's written opinion on the statehood question suggests that it was dictated by the same basic premise which prompted him to act respecting slavery. "More than anything else, it depends on whether the admission or rejection of the new state would tend the more strongly to the restoration of the national authority throughout the Union. That which helps more in his direction," he maintained, "is the most expedient *at this time*."{40} (Italics are those of the author.) That statesman from the West whom Walt Whitman had years earlier called forth to save the Union, Lincoln was, fortunately, at the helm to reconcile a critical conflict of state and national interests during the darkest, if not the finest, hour for both the nation and West Virginia.

REFERENCES

1. See John Hope Franklin, *The Emancipation Proclamation* (Garden City, 1963).

2. Lincoln's confidant was Orville H. Browning who was named by Illinois to fill the unexpired term of Stephen A. Douglas, the Democrat who had defeated Lincoln in the 1858 Senate contest. James G. Randall and T. C. Pease, eds., "The Diary of Orville H. Browning," *Illinois State Historical Collections*, (Springfield, 1933), I, 550-551. For a nationalistic viewpoint, see *A Banner in the Hills, West Virginia Statehood* (New York, 1963) by George E. Moore, a decorated World War II officer, a Pennsylvanian and product of the West Virginia University graduate school. His account is similar to, but far more reliable than, an earlier account by a participant in the statehood movement, Granville D. Hall, *The Rending of Virginia* (Chicago, 1902). For essentially Southern approaches to statehood, see *A House Divided* . . . (Pittsburgh, 1964) by Richard O. Curry, a West Virginian and a product of the University of Pennsylvania. Curry's study is a sophisticated interpretative account, similar in viewpoint to that found in *The Disruption of Virginia* (New York, 1922) by James G. McGregor, a descendant of a Confederate family of Parkersburg. Williams' review of Curry is in the *Civil War History*, XI (June 1965), 209-209.

3. West Virginia was admitted to the Union on June 20, 1863. In this account, for convenient purposes, I use the terms "western Virginia," the "Trans-Allegheny counties," and West Virginia interchangeably.

4. For a reliable and adequate account of the political and military developments in western Virginia, see F. P. Summers, *The Baltimore and Ohio in the Civil War* (New York, 1939), and his "The Baltimore and Ohio -- First in War," *Civil War History*, VII (September, 1961), 239-254. Subsequent studies have provided additional information but have produced no significant alteration to the record of events contained in these works.

This summary of Lincoln's dealings with western Virginians from April 17, 1861, when the Richmond convention adopted an ordinance of secession, until the following May 23 when the ordinance was approved by referendum is based on McGregor's *Disruption*, E. C. Smith, *The Borderland in the Civil War* (New York, 1927), *The Collected Works of Abraham Lincoln* (9 vols., New Brunswick, 1953) edited by Roy P. Basler, Series I of the *Official Records* . . . The Wheeling *Intelligencer* and the New York *Times*, May-June 1861. The Governor of Ohio was then advised that the policy of Lincoln was to encourage western Virginians to "raise the flag . . . and sustain it." J. K. L. Mansfield to William Dennison, April 25, 1861. Governors Executive Papers, The Ohio State Historical Society Library.

6. War Secretary Simon Cameron permitted Treasury Secretary Salmon P. Chase to act in his stead while Cameron was out of Washington. Chase had particular responsibilities for military activities in the western sections. See Cameron to Chase, May 25, 1861. Chase MSS, Pennsylvania Historical Society Library, and A. B. Hart, *Salmon Portland Chase* (Boston, 1899), 211-212.

7. Edward Bates to A. F. Ritchie, August 12, 1861. *The Thirty Fifth State, a Documentary History of West Virginia* (Parsons, 1966), 331-333, edited by Elizabeth Cometti and F. P. Summers.

Henry J. Raymond then described the purpose of the Wheeling government in his editorial in the New York *Times*, June 27, 1861. Said Raymond: "It is scarcely to be presumed that Jefferson Davis and Governor Letcher will regard this action of western Virginia with indifference." It was the "beginning of a system which will . . . be inaugurated in all the seceded states, the practical effect of which will be the reconstruction of the Union upon its original basis, through the agency of the loyalty still extant in them all."

9. E. W. Crittenden to S. P. Chase, July 22, 1861. Chase MSS, Library of Congress.

10. Smith, *Borderland*, 219ff. C. H. Ambler, F. H. Pierpont . . . Chapel Hill, 1937), 105. For contemporary views, see R. S. Smith (nephew of the Interior Secretary) to Warner Bateman, October 29, 1861, Bateman MSS, Western Reserve Historical Society Library, Cleveland. See also the correspondence of E. M. Stanton with Andrew Johnson, A. B. Burnside, and George F. Shepley on the question of reconstruction in the manuscript collection of Stanton's papers in the Library of Congress, March-June 1862.

11. Avery Craven stated that the 1860 election confronted the South with the prospect of a violent socio-economic revolution. Norman A. Graebner et. al., eds., *Politics and the Crisis of 1860*, (Urbana, 1961), 132-133. For other views of Lincoln's election, see A. C. Cole and J. G. R. Hamilton, The *American Historical Review* XXXVI, 740-767, and XXXVIII, 700-711.

12. John G. Nicolay and John Hay, eds., *The Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*. 12 vols. (New York, 1905), VI, 178. Maryland rejected the Confederacy for the same reasons, See Carl M. Frasure "Union Sentiment in Maryland, 1859-1861," *Maryland Historical Magazine*, XXIV, 1921, 201-224.

13. *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 3d. Session, pt. 1, 3320ff. Lincoln later observed that he had known the formation of the new state would give "a somewhat farcical air" to the Restored Government. Basler, *Works*, VII, 487-488.

14. Postmaster General Montgomery Blair arranged meetings between Lincoln and the opponents of statehood who tried to persuade the President that the new state would destroy his reconstruction program in Virginia. See Montgomery Blair to Lincoln, December 11, 1862, in the Robert Todd Collection of the Papers of Abraham Lincoln, the Library of Congress. Statehood advocates were aware of the meetings. J. C. Underwood to F. H. Pierpont, December 19, 1862. Pierpont MSS, Virginia State Library.

15. For Lincoln's dealings with Virginia in the secession crisis, see R. N. Current, *Lincoln and the First Shot* (Philadelphia, 1963). Secretary of State William H. Seward's relations with the Virginia leaders is described in Frederic Bancroft, *The Life of William H. Seward*, 2 vols. (New York, 1900). For an optimistic estimate of Union sentiment in western Virginia, see George E. Moore, "The West Virginia Incident -- an Appraisal," *West Virginia History*, XXVI, January 1965, 80-85. See a more critical commentary in Curry's "A Reappraisal of Statehood Politics in West Virginia," *Journal of Southern History*," November 1962, 404-412, and his "The Virginia Background . . . ," *West Virginia History*, July 1959, 214-247.

16. Lincoln did not hesitate to employ patronage to strengthen his party in western Virginia as elsewhere. For western Virginian conflicts over appointments, see Sherrard Clemens to Lincoln March 4, 1861, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection, and correspondence regarding the appointment of Republicans in the Willey Manuscripts, particularly July 1862. For general accounts of the President's patronage policy, see William B. Hesseltine, *Lincoln and the War Governors* (New York, 1956) and his *Lincoln's Plan of Reconstruction* (Tuscaloosa, 1960). Particularly informative is H. J. Carman and R. H. Luthin, *Lincoln and the Patronage* (New York, 1943), and F. P. Summers, *Johnson Newlon Camden . . .* (New York, 1937).

17. Harrison Hagans to W. T. Willey, May 2, 1862. Willey MSS.

18. C. H. Ambler, *Sectionalism in Virginia from 1776 to 1861* (New York, 1910), 313. Henry T. Shanks, *The Secession Movement in Virginia 1847-1861* (Richmond, 1934). C. H. Amber, et. al., eds., *Debates and Proceedings of the First Constitutional Convention . . . 1861-1863*, 3 vols., (Huntington, 1939).

19. Granville Hall asserted that the slavery issue postponed statehood by one year. Hall to N. J. Davidson, January 11, 1907. Hall MSS, West Virginia University Library. The effect of the slavery resolution is described by Henry Dering to W. T. Willey, December 16, 1861, February 5, March 3, and June 18, 1862. Willey MSS.

20. Campbell dispatched Granville Parker to appeal to 2 antislavery Congressmen and Senators. A. W. Campbell to B. F. Wade, June 26, 1862. The B. F. Wade Papers,

Library of Congress. For a scholarly study of Campbell's career, see "The Wheeling *Daily Intelligencer* and the Civil War," unpublished dissertation by Robert Morris, West Virginia University, 1964.

21. Bingham describes the radical efforts to aid the antislavery West Virginians in Congress in his correspondence with Joshua Giddings. See his letter of December 21, 1861, the Joshua R. Giddings Papers, Ohio State Historical Society Library. For other scholarly treatment of the question of the radicals, see Fawn Brodie, *Thaddeus Stevens . . .* (New York, 1959); Roy F. Nichols, *Disruption of the American Democracy* (New York, 1962); T. H. Williams, *Lincoln and the Radicals* (Madison, 1941); and David Donald, *Lincoln Reconsidered* (New York, 1961). If used with care, one finds informative Joshua R. Giddings, *History of the Rebellion, . . .* (New York, 1864). See also H. L. Trefousse, *Benjamin Franklin Wade, Radical Republican From Ohio* (New York, 1963).

22. Congress required that slaves under twenty-one on July 4, 1863, were to become free when they attained that age. Moore, *West Virginia*, 196.

23. Attorney General Edward Bates concluded that the new state was the result of an abolitionist plot. H. K. Beale, ed., "The Diary of Edward Bates, 1859-1866," *Annual Report of the American Historical Association . . . 1930*, vol. 4, 1933, p. 271. M. R. Cain, *Lincoln's Attorney General . . .* (Columbia, 1965), 225-228. E. M. Norton, a Wheeling banker appointed U. S. Marshal by Lincoln, appealed directly to the President to get the free state provision in the bill. E. M. Norton to Lincoln, July 14, 1862. The Robert Todd Lincoln Collection. For Curtin's intervention, see Pierpont to Curtin, December 6, 1862, and Curtin's reply dated three days later in the Pierpont MSS, Virginia State Library. See also David Donald, *Charles Sumner and the Coming of the Civil War* (New York, 1960) and R. N. Current, *Old Thad Stevens, A Story of Ambition* (Madison, 1942).

24. P. G. Van Winkle to W. T. Willey, June 10, July 10, 1862. Willey MSS.

25. "Who Were the Southern Whigs?" *American Historical Review*, LIX, (September 1954), 335-346.

26. See note 24 above.

27. James Drummond to W. T. Willey, December 15, 1862. Willey MSS.

28. Those who opposed the new state were accused of scheming to undermine the national government and federal commanders dealt with them accordingly. See Curry, *A House Divided*, 115ff. The new state advocates tried to convince Lincoln that opposition to statehood meant opposition to the Union. See Pierpont and Campbell to Lincoln, December 30, 31, 1862, in the Robert Todd Lincoln Collection.

29. Segar lost his law practice and his estate in Virginia after the war because of his support for the Union. Those Unionists in the western counties saw no reason to remain in Virginia where, as a decided minority, they would have no future. See A. I. Boreman to F. H. Pierpont, June 4 and August 29, 1862, and William G. Brown to F. H. Pierpont, June 22, 1861, Pierpont MSS, Virginia State Library. Thomas G. Whytal to Joseph Segar, January 3, 1861, and John A. Parker to Joseph Segar, January 3, 1868. The Wade MSS, Library of Congress.

30. "Oration Delivered at Elizabeth, Wirt County, Virginia," July 5, 1847. The P. G. Van Winkle Papers, West Virginia University Library.

31. Shanks, *Secession Movement*, 7ff. Ambler, *Sectionalism*, 213ff.

32. William G. Brown of Preston County warned Pierpont that the railroad would never be safe in Virginia. See his letter of June 24, 1861, Pierpont MSS. Fort the Confederate destruction of the railroad, see Summers, *Baltimore and Ohio*, 182-202. For Letcher's address, see the Wheeling *Intelligencer*, June 28, 1861.

33. Harold H. Hyman and B. P. Thomas, *Stanton: The Life and Times of Lincoln's Secretary of War* (New York, 1962), 15-17. For the role played by the railroad in securing the appointment of Stanton and his protection of the railroad subsequently, see Summers, *Baltimore and Ohio*, 114; G. E. Turner, *Victory Rode the Rails . . .* (Indianapolis, 1953), 45-62; Hyman and Thomas, *Stanton*, 137; F. A. Flower, *Edwin McMasters Stanton, . . .* (Boston, 1905), 116-117; Fletcher Pratt and E. S. Bradley, *Stanton, . . .* (New York, 1953), 166. Neglecting this topic is an otherwise good biography, E. S. Bradley, *Simon Cameron, Lincoln's Secretary of War* (Philadelphia, 1966), 175-210.

34. Browning, *Diary*, 596.

35. *Ibid.*, 600.

36. Williams, *Radicals*, 197ff.

37. *Congressional Globe*, 37th Congress, 3d. Session, pt. i, 38.

38. John A. Bingham to F. H. Pierpont, A. W. Campbell, and James Paxton, December 16, 1862. On December 22, 1862, Wade and Bingham reported their visit to Lincoln in behalf of the new state, suggesting that the President's approval was forthcoming. W. G. Blair to F. H. Pierpont, December 22, 1862. Pierpont MSS.

39. Basler, *Works, V*, 388-389.

40. Basler, *Works, VI*, 26-28.