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## Abraham Lincoln's Hartford speech of 5 March 1860.

Abraham Lincoln

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ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S  
HARTFORD SPEECH  
OF 5 MARCH 1860

ABRAHAM LINCOLN'S address in Hartford on the evening of 5 March 1860, made from the notes shown here, was a hard-hitting address that struck out at political opponents and called for action on the primary issues of the day. Mr. Lincoln spoke for two hours from these notes. These very brief words and fragmentary phrases were left on the table by Lincoln at the conclusion of his address. Jesse H. Lord, reporter for the *Hartford Daily Times*, picked up these notes and preserved them for posterity. They were key words on which he expanded, for example:

*"Bushwacking" and "Irrepressible conflict" were used thusly:*

"I think the Democracy (Democratic party) are pretty generally getting into a system of bushwackery in this controversy. You all know how Seward (then senator from New York) has been abused for his 'irrepressible conflict' doctrine. The Democracy have repeated it over, and over, and over again; I call this bushwackery because they have been reminded time after time, but could never be made to admit, that the old fathers said the same thing."

*"Shoe-trade" referred to an issue of the moment:*

There was at this time a strike in the shoe industry. Lincoln said on this subject, "And I am glad to know that there is a system of labor where the laborer can strike if he wants to! I would to God that such a system prevailed all over the world."

*"Right-wrong-indifference" referred to slavery:*

"We suppose slavery is wrong, and that it dangers the perpe-

Signs of decay—bushwhacking  
Inexpressible conflicts—

John Brown

Shoe-trade.

True, or not true—

If true, what?

Mason—

Plaster—

If not true, what?



tuity of the Union. Nothing else menaces it . . . Some men think it is a question of neither right or wrong; . . . There is effort to make this feeling of indifference prevalent in the country, . . .”

*“And what supported” and “Sectionalism Conservatism” were used this way:*

“. . . If slavery is right, it ought to be extended; if not, it ought to be restricted — there is no middle ground. Wrong as we think it, we can afford to let it alone where it of necessity now exists; but we *cannot* afford to extend it into free territory and around our own homes. Let us stand against it!”

Along with talks at New York City and in New Hampshire, the Hartford speech is considered by historians as contributing substantially to Mr. Lincoln’s election by making him better known in the East.

Interestingly enough, Mr. Lincoln himself admitted that perhaps the real reason he traveled East was to visit with his son Robert at Phillips Academy at Exeter, New Hampshire. In the previous year, Robert had failed 15 of the 16 entrance examinations for Harvard. Hence he was pursuing a special “crash” program of studies for Harvard admission. Robert often later said that he made his father President by his academic failures since Mr. Lincoln otherwise might not have come East.