

About the Corwin Amendment

We all “know” that slavery was the driving force behind the Civil War, because we’ve been told that all our lives. But something happened just prior to the war that we don’t hear much about. It’s important, because it shows clearly just how important the slavery issue really was (not) to both the North and the South.

There was a proposal that would have established slavery as the law of the land, throughout the entire country, forever. Actually, the Dred Scott decision had already accomplished much of that, but this proposal went much further. It would have made it impossible for even a Constitutional Amendment to ever interfere with a state’s right of slavery.

Imagine the audacity! Has a more evil proposal ever been brought before the country? And what’s frightening is that it had already been passed by the Senate and the House and signed by the president.

Thankfully, it didn’t become the law of the land. But it easily could have.

The proposal was known as the Corwin amendment. It had been the brainchild of Abraham Lincoln himself, who began working on the scheme even before he was inaugurated. It was supported by President Buchanan, who signed it on his last full day in office. It was on its way to becoming the 13th Amendment, and it had already been ratified by three states.

Several points are astonishing about this episode. Those three states were not in the South. They were Ohio, Maryland, and Illinois (“Land of

Lincoln"). Abraham Lincoln said in his First Inaugural Address that he didn't have a problem with it, so it had significant support in the North.

But it apparently didn't sound like such a good idea to the South. If they had quickly ratified the proposed Amendment, it would have been well on its way to final ratification. With support from at least three Union states, the South could easily have rallied support and got it ratified very quickly.

Why on earth would the South not have pounced on such a golden opportunity? Isn't that, supposedly, what they had always dreamed of? Why on earth would the North have even considered making such an evil offer? Wasn't that, supposedly, what they had always opposed?

It was a shameless and futile attempt by the North (specifically Lincoln) to get those Confederate states back into the Union. It shows how desperate Yankees were. Lincoln said in his First Inaugural Address that there was really only one issue dividing the North and South. That was the matter of whether Southern slave owners would be allowed to take their slaves with them into the territories. Yet in the same speech, he said he was okay if the Corwin amendment got ratified.

So, on the one hand Lincoln was refusing to allow the extension of slavery. But on the other hand, he was promoting a constitutional amendment that was basically total surrender on the slavery issue. How does that make sense?

It makes sense once you understand that the Civil War was not about slavery. Not for the North. Not for the South. The Corwin amendment episode alone proves that beyond any reasonable doubt.

There was a much bigger issue separating the two sides. The South talked openly about it. But the North was too ashamed to. So Lincoln came up with his preserving-the-Union euphemism for an unconstitutional, illegal, immoral, and unnecessary war. When even Yankees weren't buying that spin any more, only then did Lincoln try to make it about slavery. That was just more spin, and Yankees weren't buying that either. There were riots in the North violently protesting Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation and the new draft. But Lincoln won that debate with force. He waged war against the North as well as the South.

If Lincoln had wanted to free the slaves, he would have welcomed secession and openly condemned the Corwin amendment. With no Southern states in Congress any more, he and his Republican pawns could have easily passed a Constitutional amendment freeing the slaves. It wouldn't have affected slaves in the Confederate states, but Lincoln said over and over that he had no desire or authority to do that anyway. That was not his reason for starting the Civil War, and he plainly said so. But he could have freed the thousands of slaves in the border states and the territories.

By accepting secession, he could also have put a great deal of Union and international pressure on the South to give up slavery once and for all. The North could have welcomed freed blacks into their states, their schools, their factories, and their governments. They could have sent devoted abolitionists into the Confederacy to extend and expand the Underground Railroad, helping slaves escape to freedom in the North. That would have been the peaceful, Constitutional, legal, humane way of helping end slavery. It was already ending in the South, and most Southerners knew and

accepted that. They just didn't want Yankees dictating how and when it happened.

Lincoln didn't want to free any slaves. The North was not interested in that. Northern states had laws prohibiting blacks from settling there. Why? Partly because Yankees didn't want blacks competing for jobs and driving down wages. Partly because Yankees were racists. They didn't like blacks, and they didn't want them around. Their state laws, among other things, prove that.

The Civil War was not about slavery. We've been lied to all our lives. It wasn't about preserving the Union either, except in the sense that if the Union was not held together, even by force if necessary, the North could no longer control the South. The South refused to be controlled by the North. The North refused to allow them to exercise their natural and Constitutional right of secession.

If it wasn't slavery, then, what was it that drove the Union to invade the South, shred the Constitution, and slaughter 650,000 Americans, including thousands of defenseless women, children, old men, and blacks? Money. Tariff revenue. Yankee greed, Yankee ignorance, Yankee arrogance. And Lincoln's lust for power.

Why didn't the Southern states ratify the Corwin amendment as quickly as possible? Because they didn't want permanent slavery, even in the Confederacy. They (most of them, especially the leaders) well understood that slavery was evil and it had to be ended as soon as possible. For the time being, it was considered a necessary evil, but it was on its way out, just as slavery had ended in most of the rest of the world by then. They just didn't want

Yankees and abolitionists dictating the terms and timetable.

The Corwin amendment demonstrates clearly how much Yankees, specifically Lincoln, misjudged and misunderstood the South. He obviously believed that the Confederate states would jump at the Corwin amendment, rejoin the Union, and America would live happily ever after. There was much more to it than that from the South's perspective.

Why did the South fight? Because they were attacked by Union forces. What else could they do? Wouldn't you fight back if you were attacked?