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LINCOLN DESTROYED FUNDAMENTAL RIGHT OF SECESSION IN 1860s

Until the tragic and brutal War Between the States in the 1860s, secession was assumed to be a natural right. The U.S. was founded by secessionists, and the Declaration of Independence justified the secession of the separate American *states*.

In the American Revolution (secession), each state declared its independence on its own. Americans viewed secession as the ultimate check on the power of a central government. Philadelphia lawyer William Rawle, whose textbook was used at West Point, believed there was an implied right of secession in the Constitution. Certainly, there was no *prohibition* against secession in the Constitution.

Prior to the attack on Fort Sumter, there actually was widespread support *in the North* for allowing the Southern states to secede peacefully. According to historian Howard Perkins, who compiled 495 editorials from Northern newspapers written from late 1860 to mid 1861, "Editors of all parties assumed that secession as a constitutional right was not in question..." The *Chicago Daily Times* on Nov. 21, 1860, stated that "Like it or not, the cotton states will secede and Southerners will regain their sense of independence and honor."

The *Davenport Iowa Democrat and News*, on Nov. 17, 1860, stated "The leading and most influential papers of the union believe that any State of the Union has a right to secede." The *Kenosha Wisconsin Democrat* stated on Jan. 11, 1861, that "Secession is the very germ of liberty...the right of secession inheres to the people of every sovereign state."

Lincoln's arguments were that secession would destroy the government, and that representative government would "perish from the earth." But, ironically, Lincoln intentionally destroyed representative government in the new Confederate nation.

Lincoln evolved into a de facto dictator, his administration throwing into prison thousands of opponents of the war in the North and shutting down dozens of Northern newspapers that opposed his policies.

Another straw man in this equation was that of slavery. While slavery was the main reason the seven states of the Deep South were the first to secede, Lincoln, to the day he died, insisted that the war was being fought to deny Southerners the right to secession. As Thomas DiLorenzo explains in *The Real Lincoln*, "The secession of the Southern states in late 1860 and early 1861 was a culmination of the decades-long feud, beginning with the 1828 Tariff of Abominations, over the proper economic role of the central government. Lincoln and the consolidationists wanted to construct a massive mercantilist state, whereas it was primarily Southern statesmen who always stood in their way."

The Real Lincoln, by Thomas J. DiLorenzo (Three Rivers Press, N.Y., 2002) is highly recommended for understanding the real causes and effects of the War Between the States.