

## **Episode 112: Lincoln meets with Burnside on Battle Plans.**

### **Lincoln's State of the Union Message**

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During the week of November 25<sup>th</sup> 1862, there were a number of small skirmishes between Union and Confederate forces across the country. President Lincoln met with General Ambrose Burnside in order to discuss battle plans, and near the end of the week delivered his State of the Union Address to Congress.

Ambrose Burnside had initially turned down Lincoln's offer for the command of the Army of the Potomac in early November of 1862, believing that he was un-qualified for the position. Burnside changed his mind after learning that Lincoln would be removing McClellan from command, regardless of whether or not Burnside accepted, and that that next person Lincoln was offering the position to was Joseph Hooker, whom Burnside strongly disliked. Lincoln and Burnside met on the morning of November 27<sup>th</sup> at Aquia Creek, VA.

There, the two men discussed plans for a late fall campaign against the Confederate Capitol. Lincoln had proposed the idea of a three-pronged assault in which Union forces would be placed at Fredericksburg, south of the Rappahannock River, and at the Pamunkey River. Burnside disregarded this plan, and instead elected to attempt a feint attack that would mislead Lee's troops. Burnside intended to parade a portion of his army along the Warrenton Pike, making it appear that he would attack Culpeper Court House, Orange Court House, or Gordonsville. It was Burnside's hope that this would draw Lee's attention while he took troops across the Rappahannock through Fredericksburg, and then followed the rail line down to Richmond. Burnside had elected not to split his army for the three pronged assault or push

straight down from Warrenton due to the lingering presence of Stonewall Jackson in the nearby Shenandoah Valley. Jackson's troops would easily be able to flank Burnside and effectively route the Union Army.

Later in the week, Lincoln returned to Washington for the convening of the thirty-seventh Congress of the United States. Lincoln gave his State of the Union Address:

Fellow-Citizens of the Senate and House of Representatives: Since our last annual assembling another year of health and bountiful harvests has passed, and while it has not pleased the Almighty to bless us with a return of peace, we can but press on, guided by the best light He gives us, trusting that in His own good time and wise way all will yet be well.

He proposed three articles which would have a major effect on politics and morale in the years to come. The first article called for the abolishment of slavery in all states by 1900 in return for monetary compensation of the resources lost in that way. The second article granted freedom to any slaves who had, due to the rebellion, escaped their servitude. The final article would grant Congress permission to appropriate money for the creation and colonization of a new area where newly freed Africans would relocate. Lincoln concluded: "As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country. Fellow-citizens, *we* cannot escape history.....In *giving* freedom to the *slave*, we *assure* freedom to the free---honorable alike in what we give, and what we preserve. We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best, hope of earth."