

# Editorials

-Our Opinions

## DECATUR HERALD

### David Felts' Column

EVERY seat was taken and there was standing room only at Tuesday's press conference in the State House, called to unveil the blue-prints and architects' drawings of Illinois' participation in the New York 1964 world's fair.

The affair was not a conference; it was a presentation, with visual aids and sound effects. There were only two or three questions by the newspapermen, TV and radio people for they had been warned of "a tight time schedule." Members of the Illinois Commission to the World's Fair were on hand.

Gov. Otto Kerner made opening remarks; Ralph Newman, chairman of the commission, read a paper much longer than the Gettysburg Address, and some of the designers and artists spoke briefly.

The star of the show, however, was Walt Disney, in person. That gifted artist, dreamer and successful business man who does so much to balance and counter-act the sins of wicked Hollywood, came to explain—and to defend—the three-dimensional, talking figure of Abraham Lincoln which will feature the Illinois exhibit at the fair. Disney calls his technique, which he says he has spent a million dollars of his own money to develop and perfect, "audio-animatronic."

The legislative hearing room was crowded with people anxious to see the walking-talking Lincoln which has been sharply criticized—particularly in an editorial in this newspaper—as a carnival side-show gadget, unworthy of the State of Illinois and of Abraham Lincoln.

But the Tuesday presentation consisted merely of color slides projected on a screen, pictures of conventional sketches of Lincoln in various poses—but not moving—while a sound track delivered Lincoln quotes in an acceptable voice that had something of Will Rogers in it.

The screen presentation concluded with "The Battle Hymn of the Republic" with two choruses, and the American Flag waving in the breeze. The applause was terrific.

But what will the "audio-animatronic" Lincoln look like?

Walt Disney, an Illinois native (Chicago) returned to the Land of Lincoln, made an eloquent presentation of his big idea. He said:

"I have more at stake in this presentation than the State of Illinois. I'm not a carnival operator. I'm staking my reputation that this will be a dignified production."

Walt Disney does, indeed, have much at stake in his Lincoln presentation. For if it is a success, and quiets the skeptics, then there may be "audio-animatronic" presentations of Thomas Jefferson, of Lindebergh, of Robert E. Lee on Traveler and of John Glenn.

Those who now are skeptical of three-dimensional animations may be in the same boat with those who once scoffed at motion pictures, or "the talkies."

But it is one thing to audio-animate an elephant, a duck or seven dwarfs, but something else again to apply the same techniques to Abraham Lincoln—or Thomas Jefferson or Robert E. Lee.

For our part, we would stand on the screen presentation at Springfield last Tuesday as the Lincoln attraction in the Illinois exhibit at the 1964 world's fair, and forget the gadgetry.

OF THIS—Oh Yes—AND THAT: We do not get to Springfield, our home for a dozen years in the 1920s and early 30s, often enough.

We are reminded that when we lived and worked in Springfield we went only now and then to the State House. After all, it was accessible at any time. Our Sire could not understand why we did not spend every leisure hour watching "our legislators" in action.

And we must confess, with some shame, that although we lived only a couple of blocks from the Lincoln Home in Springfield, we did not visit the home until after we had moved to another city.

WALT DISNEY told a questioner who had asked what would be done with the three-dimensional "Lincoln" after the world's fair, that he has put up all the money for developing and building the presentation. That seemed to suggest he would keep it.

Funny thing: an editorial on this page sharply criticizing the proposed walking-talking "Lincoln" bore the caption:

Now He Belongs To Walt Disney?

APPEARED IN ALL LINCOLN SE-HAL'S NEWSPAPERS:

- 1) EAST ST. LOUIS JOURNAL
- 2) URBANA COURIER
- 3) SOUTHERN ILLINOISIAN
- 4) DECATUR HERALD
- 5) QUINCY WHIG

(N.B.—THE SOUTHERN ILLINOISIAN CIRCULATES IN 10 DOWNSTATE CITIES.)