

DAVID FELT'S COLUMN,

Now He Belongs To Walt Disney?

THE VERY idea of a life-size figure of Abraham Lincoln fashioned from fibreglass and plastic, animated and given a tape-recorded voice, is revolting even if the figure should be exhibited only in a wax museum on a carnival midway.

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But that such a micabre effigy is to be the central attraction of the official Illinois state exhibit at the 1964-65 World's Fair in New York should stir vigorous protest here in the Lincoln country.

The moving, speaking figure is being made by one of the Walt Disney enterprises. The fingers will move, the head will nod up and down and the plastic features will be made to frown or smile, according to the script. The figure will "speak" some of the better known passages from Lincoln's speeches.

The 73rd Illinois General Assembly appropriated a million dollars to pay for the state's official participation in the New York world's fair. Sponsors of the appropriation made much of the proposal to give the state's exhibit a Lincoln theme.

It was assumed at the time that the Lincoln theme would be exemplified in a dignified mood, one in keeping with the universal admiration for Illinois' greatest citizen. Some departure from the rigid stereotypes was to be expected as desirable.

But who could have dreamed that the Abraham Lincoln of the state's official exhibit would be in the mood, even if considerably more sophisticated, of the John Wilkes Booth and Jesse James effigies exhibited on carnival midways?

A member of the state commission who confesses he once was skeptical of the animated plastic image says that when he saw the production, he was "overwhelmed." Now he says the Disneyland-type Lincoln may be "the hit of the fair."

This newspaper now is all the more satisfied that it was right in objecting to the state appropriation for the Illinois exhibit at the New York fair.

APPEAR IN ALL LINDSAY-SCHAUB NEWSPAPERS. (5) DONALD TALE