

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN'S POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

Seventy-five years ago on November 6, 1860, Abraham Lincoln was elected to the presidency of the United States of America. This fact has suggested the compiling of some brief excerpts from Lincoln's writings and sayings which reveal his political philosophy.

Let none falter who thinks he is right.

It is no pleasure for me to triumph over any one.

Come what will I will keep my faith with friend and foe.

Be sure you put your feet in the right place and then stand firm.

In every case and at all hazards the Government must be perpetuated.

If I make a mistake it doesn't merely affect me or you but the country.

No party can be held responsible for what individual members of it say and do.

We should avoid planting and cultivating too many thorns in the bosom of society.

The political atmosphere is such just now that I fear to do anything, lest I do wrong.

Is it desired that I shall shift the ground upon which I have been elected? I cannot do it.

If I were to be wounded personally I think I would not shun it, but it is the life of the nation.

I have no objection to "fuse" with anybody provided I can fuse on grounds which I think right.

The most reliable indication of public purpose in this country is derived through our popular elections.

I mean to say nothing which shall hereafter embarrass me in the performance of what may seem to be my duty.

Such men, when elected, may prove true, but such votes are given them in expectation that they will prove false.

It is not the qualified voters, but the qualified voters who choose to vote, that constitute the political power of the state.

It is not entirely safe when one is misrepresented under his very nose, to allow the misrepresentation to go uncontradicted.

If both factions, or neither, shall abuse you, you will probably be about right. Beware of being assailed by one and praised by the other.

I advised those who did me the honor of a hearing to "stand with" anybody who stands right, and I am still willing to follow my own advice.

I could not take the office without taking the oath nor was it my view that I might take an oath to get power and break the oath in using the power.

I happen, temporarily, to occupy this White House. I am a living witness that any one of your children may look to come here as my father's child has.

I have meant to assail the motives of no party, or individual; and if I have in any instance (of which I am not conscious) departed from my purpose, I regret it.

If the people should, by whatever mode or means, make it an executive duty to re-enslave such persons (negroes), another, and not I, must be their instrument to perform it.

Accustomed to trample on the rights of others, you have lost the genius of your own independence and become the fit subject of the first cunning tyrant who rises among you.

Our best and greatest men have greatly underestimated the size of this question. They have constantly brought forward small cures for great sores—plasters too small to cover the wound.

As a pilot I have used my best exertions to keep afloat our Ship of State, and shall be glad to resign my trust at the appointed time to another pilot more skillful and successful than I may prove.

Revolutionize through the ballot box, and restore the government once more to the affections and hearts of men by making it express, as it was intended to do, the highest spirit of justice and liberty.

I reiterate that the majority should rule. If I adopt a wrong policy, the opportunity for condemnation will occur in four years' time. Then I can be turned out, and a better man with better views put in my place.

We here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain; that this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom; and that government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.

If you will give up your restlessness for new positions, and back me manfully on the grounds upon which you and other kind friends gave me the election, and have approved of my public documents, we shall go through triumphantly.

It is an old axiom and a very sound one that he that dances should pay the fiddler. Now, sir, if any gentlemen, whose money is a burden to them, choose to lead off a dance, I am decidedly opposed to the people's money being used to pay the fiddler.

The man who stands by and says nothing when the peril of his government is discussed, cannot be misunderstood. If not hindered, he is sure to help the enemy; much more if he talks ambiguously—talks for his country with "buts," and "ifs," and "ands."

It is in order that each one of you may have, through this free government which we have enjoyed, an open field and a fair chance for your industry, enterprise, and intelligence; that you may have equal privileges in the race of life, with all its desirable human aspirations.

To give the victory to the right, not bloody bullets, but peaceful ballots only are necessary. Thanks to our good old Constitution, and organization under it, these alone are necessary. It only needs that every right thinking man shall go to the polls, and without fear or prejudice vote as he thinks.

The legitimate object of government is to do for a community of people whatever they need to have done, but cannot do at all, or cannot so well do, for themselves, in their separate and individual capacities. In all that the people can individually do as well for themselves, government ought not to interfere.

Allow all the governed an equal voice in the government; that and that only is self-government. . . . Finally, I insist that if there is anything that it is the duty of the whole people never to intrust to hands other than their own that thing is the preservation and perpetuity of their own liberties and institutions.

Think nothing of me; take no thought for the political fate of any man whomsoever, but come back to the truths that are in the Declaration of Independence. While pretending no indifference to earthly honors, I do claim to be actuated in this contest by something higher than an anxiety for the office. I charge you to drop every paltry and insignificant thought for any man's success. It is nothing; I am nothing; Judge Douglas is nothing. But do not destroy that immortal emblem of humanity—the Declaration of Independence.