

LINCOLN LORE

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ELECTION AFTERTHOUGHTS

Lincoln's political philosophy is nowhere revealed to better advantage than in the following statements which he made apparently after much reflection:

We cannot have free government without elections.

His bare opinion goes far to fix the opinion of others.

I am not at liberty to shift my ground—that is out of the question.

So ready are we all to cry out and ascribe motives when our own toes are pinched.

The way these measures were to help the cause was not to be by magic or miracles.

The public interest cannot fail to suffer in the hands of this irresponsible and unscrupulous man.

I go no further than this because I wish to avoid both the substance and the appearance of dictation.

I could not, however, let the whole political result go to smash, on a point merely personal to myself.

I do not impugn the motives of any one opposed to me. It is no pleasure to me to triumph over anyone.

No ingenuity can keep these antagonistic elements in harmony long. Another explosion will soon come.

Whoever molds public sentiment goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces judicial decisions.

My sincere wish is that both sides will allow bygones to be bygones and look to the present & future only.

In this age, and in this country, public sentiment is everything. With it nothing can fail, against it nothing can succeed.

You can fool all the people some of the time and some of the people all the time, but you cannot fool all the people all of the time.

I don't want to be unjustly accused of dealing illiberally or unfairly with an adversary either in court or in a political canvass or anywhere else.

What is "sovereignty" in the political sense of the term? Would it be far wrong to define it "a political community without a political superior?"

Of course I would have preferred success; but failing in that, I have no regrets for having rejected all advice to the contrary, and resolutely made the struggle.

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.

Let them be placed in the scales solely on what they have done, giving evidence of capacity for civil administration; and let him kick the beam who is found lightest.

To give victory to the right, not bloody bullets but peaceful ballots only are necessary. Thanks to our good old Constitution and organization under it, only these are necessary.

While the people retain their virtue and vigilance, no administration, by any extreme of wickedness or folly, can very seriously injure the government in the short space of four years.

He bravely endured the obscurity which the unpopularity of his principles imposed, and never accepted official honors until those honors were ready to admit his principles with him.

He had said before, and now repeated, that he indulged in no feeling of triumph over any man who thought or acted differently from himself. He had no such feeling toward any living man.

I am sure my old political friends will thank me for tendering, as I do, the nation's gratitude to those and other noble men whom no partizan malice or partizan hope can make false to the nation's life.

I think too much reliance is placed in noisy demonstrations, importing speakers from a distance and the like. They excite prejudice and close the avenues to sober reason. The "home-production" principle in my judgment is the best.

Well, the election is over; and, in the main point, we are beaten. Still my view is that the fight must go on. Let no one falter. The question is not half settled. New splits and divisions will soon be upon our adversaries, and we shall fuse again.

It will be a good deal, if we fail to remember this in malice, (as I hope we shall fail to remember it;) but it is altogether too much to ask us to try to stand with them on the platform which has proved altogether insufficient to sustain them alone.

Why did they not assert themselves? Why stand passive and allow themselves to be trodden down by a minority? Why did they not hold popular meetings and have a convention of their own to express and enforce the true sentiment of the State?

In this struggle for the nation's life, I cannot so confidently rely on those whose elections may have depended upon disloyal votes. Such men, when elected, may prove true; but such votes are given them in the expectation that they will prove false.

To press it upon those who have refused to listen, and still refuse, would be wanting in self-respect, and would have an appearance of sycophancy and timidity which would excite contempt of good men and encourage bad ones to clamor the more loudly.

I have never professed an indifference to the honors of official station; and were I to do so now, I should only make myself ridiculous. Yet I have never failed—do not now fail—to remember that in the republican cause there is a higher aim than that of mere office.

Nothing is likely to be so baleful in the great work before us as stepping aside from the main object to consider who will get the offices if a small matter shall go thus, and who else will get them if it shall go otherwise. It is a time now for real patriots to rise above all this.