

LINCOLN LORE

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LINCOLN AND CONGRESS

The session of Congress, just closed, has been without a precedent in so many particulars that it would be impossible to make any comparison, whatever, with previous convocations of this august body. However, our attention is called to the fact that Abraham Lincoln served as a congressman during the war with Mexico, and we are also reminded that he was the President of the Nation when another war of greater magnitude took place.

The Thirtieth Congress

The Thirtieth Congress was in session from December 6, 1847 to August 14, 1848 and from December 4, 1848 to March 3, 1849. The two senators from Illinois were Sidney Breese and Stephen A. Douglas. Robert Smith, John A. McClernand, Orlando B. Ficklin, John Wentworth, William A. Richardson, Thomas J. Turner and Abraham Lincoln were the members of the House of Representatives. Lincoln was the only representative of the Whig party.

Lincoln's attitude toward the Mexican War has often been misunderstood and some conclusions have been drawn with reference to his one term in Congress which will not stand in the light of available records. It is true, that Lincoln refused to sanction by his vote, statements which were made with reference to the beginning of the Mexican War. His "spot" resolutions, as they were called, were to the point.

The Mexican War began in May 1846, and while it was virtually over by September 1847, it was not until August 1848 that the last of the troops came out of the country. There were many war bills which came before the Thirtieth Congress on which Lincoln voted, which had directly to do with the soldiers.

Douglas charged in the Ottawa debate that Lincoln had "distinguished himself by his opposition to the Mexican War," Lincoln replied, "Whenever they (the Government) asked for any money, or land warrants, or anything to pay the soldiers there, during all that time I gave the same vote that Judge Douglas did."

Douglas, also said in the debate at Ottawa, that "when Lincoln returned home from Congress he found that the indignation of the people followed him everywhere, and he was again submerged, or obliged to return into private life, forgotten by his former friends." It is well-known by all informed students of Lincoln that four Illinois men, who were anxious to go to Congress, agreed that each one should have a term, if he could be

elected, and not be a candidate for reelection the following term. The Mexican stand of Lincoln had nothing to do with his failure to run and he was also convinced that the defeat of Logan who followed him as a candidate was in no way connected with his (Lincoln's) own stand on the Mexican War question. (See Letter to William Schouler, August 28, 1848.)

Within the next four years after the term in Congress, he was urged to run for the legislature, his name was proposed for governor, and he was made a member of the Whig National Committee, and also mentioned for an United States Judge. In 1854, six years after his service in Congress, he was elected to the legislature by the largest majority of any of the candidates in his district which should serve as a very definite challenge to those who feel he was repudiated for his congressional record.

The Three Civil War Congresses

There were three different congresses which served during the Civil War. The Thirty-seventh Congress

opened with a special session of the Senate beginning on inauguration day, March 4, 1861, followed by three sessions of the entire Congress, the last one closing on March 3, 1863. The Thirty-eighth Congress opened with a special session of the Senate beginning on March 4, 1863, followed by two sessions of the entire Congress, concluding on March 3, 1865. The Thirty-ninth Congress opened with a special session of the Senate on March 4, 1865 and followed by two sessions of the entire Congress, concluding on March 3, 1867. Abraham Lincoln served as President of the Nation during the first two and part of the third congresses mentioned above.

On December 1, 1862 Abraham Lincoln delivered his annual message to Congress when the war had been in progress over a year and a half. The opening paragraph and excerpts from the three closing paragraphs of the address are here printed verbatim, and without comment:

"Since your last annual assembling another year of health and bountiful harvest 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."

"I do not forget the gravity which should characterize a paper addressed to the Congress of the nation by the Chief Magistrate of the nation. Nor do I forget that some of you are my seniors, nor that many of you have more experience than I in the conduct of public affairs. Yet I trust that in view of the great responsibility resting upon me, you will perceive no want of respect to yourselves in any undue earnestness I may seem to display."

"The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. 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. We of this Congress and this administration will be remembered in spite of ourselves. No personal significance or insignificance can spare one or another of us. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honor or dishonor, to the latest generation. We say we are for the Union. The world will not forget that we say this. We know how to save the Union. The world knows we do know how to save it. We—even we here—hold the power and bear the responsibility."

Dr. Warren's Annual Itinerary

The editor of "Lincoln Lore" while on his fourteenth annual itinerary would be pleased to meet any of his Lincoln friends who may be living in or near the cities where he is to speak on the days cited. The schedule of his local engagements may be secured at the offices of the Lincoln National Life Insurance Company in the following cities: Aurora, Illinois, January 25; Racine, Wisconsin, January 26; Appleton, Wisconsin, January 27; Madison, Wisconsin, January 28, 29; Minneapolis, Minnesota, February 1, 2, 3; Duluth, Minnesota, February 4; Hibbing, Minnesota, February 5; Milwaukee, Wisconsin, February 8, 9; Chicago, Illinois, February 10, 11, 12, 13; Pontiac, Michigan, February 15; Detroit, Michigan, February 16, 17; Adrian, Michigan, February 18; Toledo, Ohio, February 19; Muskegon, Michigan, February 22; Grand Rapids, Michigan, February 23, 24; Kalamazoo, Michigan, February 25; Jackson, Michigan, February 26; Springfield, Ohio, March 1; Columbus, Ohio, March 2; Canton, Ohio, March 3; Akron, Ohio, March 4, 5.