

# LINCOLN LORE

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## LINCOLN'S EXTRACTS FROM WASHINGTON'S FAREWELL ADDRESS

One of the compensations which comes to those engaged in historical research is an occasional thrill experienced when finding some important but little known document. While making a survey of the General Orders issued by Abraham Lincoln as Commander in Chief, the editor of *Lincoln Lore* was surprised to discover a digest where Abraham Lincoln had extracted from Washington's Farewell Address such passages as he felt might inspire the men in the Army.

The adjutant general's office released, under the caption of General Orders No. 16, a report of a concurrent resolution, passed by the two houses of Congress, in February, 1862, relating to Washington's birthday. The order, affecting the men in the field, follows:

"Resolved, That the President of the United States, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, be requested to direct that orders be issued for the reading, to the Army and Navy of the United States, of the Farewell Address of George Washington, or such parts thereof as he may select, on the 22d day of February, instant."

The signed order of Mr. Lincoln then follows:

"II. In compliance with the foregoing resolutions, the President of the United States, Commander-in-Chief of the Army and Navy, orders that the following extracts from the Farewell Address of George Washington, be read to the troops at every military post, and at the head of the several regiments and corps of the Army."

The limited space available in this bulletin will not allow the printing of all of the excerpts from Washington's address which Mr. Lincoln selected, yet with both the salutation and conclusion omitted, the heart of the portions of Washington's famous speech which the President felt were opportune are here presented:

"While every part of our country feels an immediate and particular interest in union, all the parts combined cannot fail to find in the united mass of means and efforts, greater strength, greater resource, proportionately greater security from external danger, a less frequent interruption of their peace by foreign nations, and, what is of inestimable value, they must derive from union an exemption from those broils and wars between themselves which so frequently afflict neighbor-

ing countries not tied together by the same government, which their own rivalships alone would be sufficient to produce, but which opposite foreign alliances, attachments, and intrigues would stimulate and embitter. Hence, likewise, they would avoid the necessity of those overgrown military establishments which, under any form of government, are inauspicious to liberty, and which are to be regarded as particularly hostile to republican liberty. In this sense it is that your union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty, and that the love of the one ought to endeavor to you the preservation of the other.

"To the efficacy and permanency of your union, a government for the whole is indispensable. No alliances, however strict, between the parts can be an adequate substitute. They must inevitably experience the infractions and interruptions which alliances in all times have experienced. Sensible of this momentous truth, you have improved upon your first essay by the adoption of a constitution of government better calculated than your former for an intimate union and for the efficacious management of your common concerns. This government, the offspring of your own choice, uninfluenced and unawed, adopted upon full investigation and mature deliberation, completely free in its principles, in the distribution of its powers, uniting security with energy, and containing within itself provision for its own amendment, has a just claim to your confidence and your support. Respect for its authority, compliance with its laws, acquiescence in its measures, are duties enjoined by the fundamental maxims of true liberty. The basis of our political system is, the right of the people to make and to alter their constitutions of government. But the constitution which at any time exists, until changed by an explicit and authentic act of the whole people, is sacredly obligatory upon all. The very idea of the power and the right of the people to establish government, presupposes the duty of every individual to obey the established government.

"All obstructions to the execution of the laws, all combinations and associations, under whatever plausible character, with the real design to direct, control, counteract, or awe the regular deliberations and action of the constituted authorities, are destructive of this fundamental principle, and of fatal tendency. They serve to organize faction; to give it an artificial and extraordinary force; to put in the place of the delegated will of the na-

tion the will of party, often a small but artful and enterprising minority of the community; and according to the alternate triumphs of different parties, to make the public administration the mirror of the ill-concerted and incongruous projects of faction, rather than the organ of consistent and wholesome plans, digested by common councils, and modified by mutual interests.

"Observe good faith and justice towards all nations. Cultivate peace and harmony with all. Religion and morality enjoin this conduct; and can it be that good policy does not equally enjoin it? It will be worthy of a free, enlightened, and, at no distant period, a great nation, to give to mankind the magnanimous and too novel example of a people always guided by an exalted justice and benevolence. Who can doubt that in the course of time and things the fruits of such a plan would richly repay any temporary advantages that might be lost by a steady adherence to it? Can it be that Providence has connected the permanent felicity of a nation with its virtue? The experiment, at least, is recommended by every sentiment which ennobles human nature. Alas! it is rendered impossible by its vices.

"Harmony and a liberal intercourse with all nations are recommended by policy, humanity, and interest. But even our commercial policy should hold an equal and impartial hand; neither seeking nor granting exclusive favors or preferences; consulting the natural course of things; diffusing and diversifying by gentle means the stream of commerce, but forcing nothing; establishing with powers so disposed (in order to give trade a stable course, to define the rights of our merchants, to enable the government to support them) conventional rules of intercourse, the best that present circumstances and natural opinion will permit, but temporary and liable to be from time to time abandoned or varied, as experience and circumstances shall dictate; constantly keeping in view that it is folly in one nation to look for disinterested favors from another—that it must pay with a portion of its independence for whatever it may accept under that character—that by such acceptance it may place itself in the condition of having given equivalents for nominal favors, and yet of being reproached with ingratitude for not having given more. There can be no greater error than to expect or calculate upon real favors from nation to nation. It is an illusion which experience must cure, which a just pride ought to discard."