

# LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Life Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor  
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 827

Fort Wayne, Indiana

February 12, 1945

## THE LINCOLN BOOK OF THE YEAR FOR 1944

There is no literary selection made by the Lincoln Foundation Advisory Group which is observed with greater interest than the choice of the Lincoln Book of the year. Reinhard H. Luthin is the author of the volume favored by the committee for the year 1944, and the title of the book is *The First Lincoln Campaign*.

The number of cloth bound books published in 1944 was somewhat less than those appearing in previous years, yet there were a sufficient collection of worthwhile titles to invite real competition. The book selected as Highly Commendable was Harry E. Pratt's *Concerning Mr. Lincoln*.

While the story of the assassination has invited more literary attention than any other Lincoln subject during the past decade, various phases of the political campaign of 1860 seem to be the most often discussed episode among more recent contributions. Most of the interesting monographs which have come from the pen of Mr. Luthin are confined to this field of research, and he has become known as an authority in the field of pre-Civil War politics. As a lecturer in history, in Columbia University, he has compiled and interpreted a vast amount of information relating directly to the political campaign of 1860, with special attention given to the part Lincoln played in the contest.

The author maintains that the Republican Party was a composite group made up of "former anti-slavery Whigs, Old Line Whigs, die-hard Whigs, former Free-Soil Democrats, disgruntled organization Democrats, Know-Nothings, abolitionists, protective tariff devotees, 'free land' reformers (now called 'Homesteaders'), sponsors of a Pacific railroad, internal improvement champions, naturalized Germans, and others who for some reason hated Franklin Pierce, James Buchanan, or Stephen A. Douglas." Apparently the author was not deeply impressed with the heterogeneous origin of the Republicans, as his concluding comment emphasized a negative objective by which the elements were "bound together—a common hostility to the Democrats."

Following the introductory section the author utilizes the following five chapters in presenting brief political biographies of the outstanding contestants for the Republican nomination in 1860, and uses interesting captions to identify the following aspirants:

1. William H. Seward, "Chieftain of the Anti-Slavery Whigs."
2. Salmon Portland Chase, "Champion of the Free Democracy."
3. Edward Bates, "A Pillar of Conservatism."
4. Abraham Lincoln, "An Anti-Nebraska Whig of the Prairies."
5. Simon Cameron, "A Conservative Protectionist."

Another chapter which serves as a sort of an appendix to the contents in the five sections relating to the above champions, collects minor aspirants under the caption, "Other Hopefuls," including: Nathaniel P. Banks, a former Coalitionist; John McLean, former Old Line Whig; Benjamin Franklin Wade, anti-slavery radical; William L. Dayton, Republican vice-presidential candidate in 1856; John M. Read, anti-Cameron antagonist; Cassius M. Clay, former anti-slavery Whig; Alexander Ramsey, free-land candidate; William Pitt Fessenden, former anti-slavery Whig; Jacob Collamer, also a former Whig; and John Bell, a Constitutional Unionist.

The chapters discussing the Democratic and Republican conventions under the captions of "Democratic Dissension" and "The Triumph of Availability," respectively, seem to be especially interesting although from the author's detailed accounts of the gatherings, one wonders if the convention which nominated the total abstainer, Abraham Lincoln, was more interested in "card playing," "gin cocktails," and "houses of ill repute" than the other political gathering where the intemperate Douglas was the hero of a great many delegates. It is also difficult to understand why Mr. Luthin should refer to the supporters of the Republican candidates as "King-makers" while the Democratic delegates were duly authorized delegations of men intent on preserving the democratic form of government.

The chapter on "Organizing for Victory" begins with the introduction of statement that "When Lincoln was nominated for president he was largely unknown outside Illinois." At least, he was not unknown among the politicians for he had served a term in Congress and his personal appearance alone would not allow most of the members of that body to forget him. Without any organized effort he had received 110 votes as a nominee for Vice-President in the first Republican convention in 1856 at Philadelphia. His debates with Douglas, two years before, had been published by the press and received wide comment. His speech at Cooper Institute, in New York, and subsequent speeches in the New England States were given much publicity.

The chapters on "The Safe States," "The Doubtful States" and "New York" present an excellent summary of the work done at the convention preliminary to the balloting, and reveals how the various state delegations shifted positions until finally the majority of them were lined up for Lincoln.

Possibly the most valuable section in the book, from the viewpoint of a reviewer, is the last chapter which Mr. Luthin entitles, "Summing Up," and it is an excellent digest of what has been presented. In the eight pages the author gives a condensed story of the argument which in itself would make a valuable contribution to the political history relating to Lincoln's nomination.

It is a pleasure, indeed, to include *The First Lincoln Campaign*, by Reinhard H. Luthin, as the *Book of the Year for 1944*.