

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 885

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

March 26, 1946

MOST TIMELY EDITORIAL—FEBRUARY, 1946

Lincoln editorials heretofore selected for recognition by the Lincoln National Life Foundation have appeared in newspapers published in Virginia, Oregon, New York, and Massachusetts. This year the state of Wisconsin is added to the list with a Lincoln birthday contribution from the Racine Journal. The second choice is awarded to the Peoria Morning Star, a paper published in the Lincoln country. Both of the editorials follow:

LINCOLN AND TODAY

Racine Journal, February 12, 1946

Lincoln just missed days of turmoil as vexing as any today. Dying when the final victory was in sight but not quite completed, he had his plan for the restoration of the Union and the peaceful winding up of the war. His plan was not that of the congressional leaders, some of whom were wild men out for the blood of the South, some politicians who wanted to secure supremacy not only for their party but for their wing of the party. They turned the South over to bands of crooks to govern. Some even wanted to divide up the South into military districts, wiping out state lines, and to keep them permanently as conquered areas.

All these designs President Johnson, Lincoln's successor, fought valiantly. He managed to stave off some of the worst. Lincoln would have taken the same stand, but Lincoln, through his prestige and his wisdom, would have had an easier time. The Lincoln legend may have been furthered by these days of stress, when the martyred president was sorely missed. For that matter, in any time of trouble the nation could use a Lincoln. Without him it can turn with benefit to his principles.

It would be comforting and instructing to know how Abraham Lincoln would have met problems similar to those which the United States faces now.

How would he have helped to answer the question whether "We shall nobly save or meanly lose the last, best hope of earth" through a closer organization of the world's nations? How might he have aided in solving our industrial disputes quickly and fairly?

It is idle to speculate. But it is also excusable to turn to some of Lincoln's thoughts on labor and read them with present circumstances in mind. The particular thoughts quoted here were contained in some informal remarks which he made to a delegation of New York working men in March of 1864.

They are not a formal economic and social philosophy. They may not be geared to today's thinking but they make interesting reading, nevertheless.

"The strongest bond of human sympathy, outside of the family relations," Lincoln said, "should be one uniting all working people, of all nations, and tongues, and kindred." (That would get him called a Communist today).

"Nor should this lead to a war upon property or the owners of property. Property is the fruit of labor; property is desirable; is a positive good in the world. That some should be rich shows that others may become rich, and hence is just encouragement to industry and enterprise." (That would get him called a conservative, or worse).

"Let not him who is houseless pull down the house of another, but let him work diligently and build one for himself, thus by example assuring that his own should be safe from violence when built." (That might be called good sense and sound advice which is probably more apt today than it was in 1864).

The Lincoln myth, as it is called, arose from a natural if misleading, impulse to regard him as a prophet, as in some sense superhuman. Lincoln's message to the nation in these times will be missed if he is thought of as more than a man.

He had that mixture of resolution and tenderness which is the mark of inner strength. He was simple, unselfish, unswerving in his moral faith. The sources of his strength came from the depth of his own conviction, from the quiet certainties of his own conscience.

ABRAHAM LINCOLN WALKS TODAY

Peoria Morning Star, February 12, 1946

The nation today pays honor and homage to her greatest son. He of all the great leaders in our history is most typically American. In mind and texture he was fashioned from the very soil and air, the hills and streams, the fields and woods of America. He had an abiding faith in American institutions, and he dedicated his life to their preservation. We must again accept him as our guide and inspiration if those institutions and the democracy for which he lived and died are to endure. We witness today an inclination to mock and laugh at everything that is dear and sacred in the history of America. There are subversive influences in our midst that strive to create distrust and hate of the kind of government that Lincoln prayed should not perish from the earth. It is well that at this time of weakening faith we should have again the opportunity to commemorate the birth of Abraham Lincoln.

It was America that permitted and enabled him to rise from poverty and obscurity to the highest position in the land. His achievement should dispel any counsel of despair and offer a challenge to the present youth of America to respect and defend the fundamental principles on which this nation was founded. No other nation and no other system of government has ever provided the opportunity to all its citizens, rich and poor and of every race and creed that has been the common heritage of all Americans. Abraham Lincoln would have had little patience with the strange doctrines that are now prevalent in the world. He would have fought, as we must fight, the hideous and despairing efforts of Communism; as he did fight the cruel and hideous institution of human slavery.

He was not an appeaser nor one who yielded to the expediency of the hour but a man of character and high principles who faced unflinchingly the task that duty and destiny set for him. He refused to listen to fearful and timid souls, even men high in his own party, who urged him to assure the South that he would sanction slavery in order to avoid conflict or that he would allow the South to secede and set up an independent nation. His sublime faith in God and country and his fidelity to human rights would not allow him to compromise with wrong and evil. His faith and his courage kept us an undivided nation and free people.

The nation calls to us today for the same devotion and faith that inspired Abraham Lincoln. There is now an even greater threat to our national integrity, to the freedoms that we have enjoyed as a people, and to the perpetuation of all those rights and benefits that patriots throughout our history have esteemed more than life itself. We need now as never before the ever-living moral influence and example of Abraham Lincoln to guide, strengthen and uphold us. His gentle and noble spirit and his patriotic American principles are again the hope of the nation.