

# 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 937

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

March 24, 1947

## MOST TIMELY EDITORIAL — FEBRUARY 1947

Lincoln Editorials published on February 12th from over one hundred of the leading newspapers in America were received this year by the Lincoln National Life Foundation and given consideration for the most timely editorial inspired by the cabin born President. First honors went to an editorial by F. Lauriston Bullard appearing in *The Boston Herald* entitled "If Lincoln Were Here."

### IF LINCOLN WERE HERE

An eminent American historian declared 23 years ago, on the anniversary of Lincoln's birth, that our Civil War was a world war. That novel statement is not so extravagant as it may seem. The 19th century was signalized by the growth of democracy. The gates of opportunity were opening in many lands. The walls of privilege, which for a thousand years had withstood assaults, were crumbling. For decades the favored classes of the caste systems had watched with increasing apprehension the development of the successful and powerful Republic of the West. A dismembered America would signify the discrediting of democracy. The plain people of Europe, notably among them the cotton mill workers of Lancashire, understood well what the war for the Union meant for their own future. The world awaited the outcome as indicating whether we would repudiate the foundation theory of our institutions.

In his Gettysburg Address, and in many of his state papers, President Lincoln definitely affirmed that the war was fought for the vindication of democracy everywhere. For him the American Union was founded upon the principle of equal rights for all men. The saving of the Union was a sacred cause. Ours was the best government ever devised, not that the machinery did not sometimes wobble, but that it was making men free not only in America but in other lands as well. He fought the Civil War that "the last best hope of earth" might "nobly be saved."

If Lincoln were here today he would be almost, and perhaps fully, as much concerned for the future of democracy as in 1860. He had said that both the North and the South had "deprecated war, but one of them would make war rather than let the nation survive, and the other would accept rather than let it perish." What his reactions to the perils of today would be, we may not be able accurately to surmise, but there can be no doubt as to the principle on which he would base his opinions.

He would not falter in his confidence "in the ultimate justice of the people." In the mighty conflict of ideas now going on, he would abide by the judgment he expressed in 1861, that there would be no cessation in "the struggle for maintaining in the world that form and substance of government whose leading object is to elevate the condition of men; to lift artificial weights from all shoulders; to clear the paths of laudable pursuit for all; to afford all an unfettered start and a fair chance in the race of life."

And, hating war as he did, we are confident that, as our primary defense against the infiltration of ideas to our traditions, he would depend upon the quality of our democracy. It has been said that democracies always are in trouble, which means that, in the freedom to speak and to print, there develop clashes which sometimes express themselves in violence. But for Lincoln the one unthinkable alternative would be the suppression of democracy. He had come to the end of a great war with his faith unshaken in popular government.

The man who abhorred slavery would see no solution

for any race problem anywhere in the world in the ownership of some men by other men, whether they wore shackles, or were otherwise absolutely controlled. Until he issued his Emancipation Proclamation as a war measure, he had conceded that slavery was constitutionally protected as a domestic institution. One may wonder what would be his attitude toward the denial to Negroes of their guaranteed political rights today. Also, in a world in which time and distance have been annihilated, one wonders what he would do if again a global war threatened to engulf our country and to smash our political system. We venture upon no blueprinting of the future, but we fancy that his answers to these, and to other questions more or less obvious, are implicit in the citations we have used from his writings.

Aside from the publication of the winning contribution, excerpts from a large number of other editorials are made available.

Wherever his story has been told, his deeds recounted, it has brought new hope.—*Tampa Morning Tribune*.

He loved his country better than any of its component parts.—*The Wichita Eagle*.

He had a sense of mission rather than of self.—*New York Times*.

The spirit of Lincoln is as universal as his character is enduring.—*The Indianapolis News*.

No country is more greatly blessed than one which has known the spiritual inspiration of such a leader.—*The Knoxville Journal*.

As we had need of Lincoln's leadership in time of crisis we have need of his wisdom, tolerance and example in all our years.—*Oakland Tribune*.

His humility was personal; he lacked nothing of faith in his convictions or in the future of a united nation.—*The (Philadelphia) Evening Bulletin*.

A gigantic figure emerges, and one which personifies independence and freedom.—*The (Cincinnati) Enquirer*.

If the spirit of Lincoln ruled, there would be no clash of jealous powers as nations meet to set the stage for a new peace.—*Cleveland Plain Dealer*.

Lincoln lives immortally because he was of those rare human beings, a glorified spirit, who passes his days in passionate love for humanity.—*The (New York) Daily Mirror*.

We revere his memory for the inherent goodness of the man, the wisdom of his counsel and the humanity of his administration.—*Los Angeles Evening Herald and Express*.

He was a true liberal—a believer in American ideals and constitutional rights—an unostentatious exponent of true religion.—*The Salt Lake Tribune*.

Abraham Lincoln was a rare combination of the idealistic and the practical.—*The El Paso Times*.

For millions of Americans he is the flowering of the best in our civilization and our political systems.—*The (Allentown) Morning Call*.

The strength of Abraham Lincoln was in his surpassing gentleness. History has no figure to whom he is comparable, save one.—*The (Portland) Oregonian*.

The value of the Lincoln tradition is that it challenges us to do as he did—to face the issues of our time with courage, patience, humility, and wisdom.—*The Des Moines Register*.

He developed himself as an individual, but as an individual he identified himself with the mass of humanity.—*The (Dallas) Times Herald*.

A confused and distraught world sorely needs a revival of the wisdom of "Homely Abe," that the common man everywhere may be treated with dignity.—*The Miami Herald*.