

LINCOLN LORE

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MOST TIMELY EDITORIAL—FEBRUARY 12, 1949

Each year on February 12 American newspaper editors, north and south, create an unusual anthology of tributes, political polemics and philosophical presentations, inspired by Abraham Lincoln. Many of the editorials are associated with current events of local or world significance. Others approach a mystic interpretation which reveal the Emancipator as the personification of our democratic way of life.

The Lincoln National Life Foundation attempts to select each year from this compilation of writings one that seems to merit special recognition. An editorial entitled "The Shadow That Lasts" which appeared in the *New York Herald Tribune* was awarded first place by the judges delegated to pass upon the merits of the contributions. It follows in this column.

The Shadow That Lasts

Abraham Lincoln was a tall man. He cast a tall shadow in New Salem's muddy streets in what were probably the happiest days of his life. With a professionally acquired high hat he cast a still longer shadow in the period of his Springfield law practice. And as a war President his shadow deepened and lengthened in Washington years of tremulous bugles and a divided country. On Lincoln's 140th birthday the shadow that he casts is longer than the miles from a tomb in Sangamon County to a memorial along the Potomac or a statue in London's Parliament Square. It is the shadow of America. For Abraham Lincoln was what has been finely termed "the consummate American."

If history is the biography of a few men, the amount of our nation's history which was written by the life of Lincoln bulks far greater than that of other men whose names live up and down our country in marble and bronze, but who cast shorter shadows. There have been more than 4,000 books written about the man who was born in a Kentucky cabin beside a corn patch. It is safe to say that many thousands more will be written and read. Others of the great have had their scholars and specialists in biography. Lincoln, of course, has had these in huge number. But his surest scholars and specialists are the people of America who read with eagerness every new volume concerning him. They read of him with love and understanding which disregards fancy of myth. They believe in him and receive him as one of their own. For with a democracy's instinctive wisdom Americans have always known that Lincoln lived and died as the embodiment of a people's government.

New names for such a government have arisen and more may arise. Men who never knew the high grass of an Illinois prairie may argue about the labels of "liberal" and "reactionary" and talk of "democracy" as something never rightly exemplified in America before their brittle time. But in their persistent exaltation and worship of Lincoln as our nation's consummate democrat the people are more right than many of their newer politicians. For the shadow of a tall Lincoln lasts as the truest substance of America. Above the people of a people's government it stretches still from coast to coast, the eternal word and incarnation of the nation's faith.

Excerpt from Other Timely Editorials

For the world he is America's greatest contribution to any Hall of Fame. *Allentown Morning Call*.

If Lincoln were alive today he would be fighting with all of his strength to save for America the great free

heritage for which he lived and worked and died. *Arizona Republic*.

The name of Abraham Lincoln is forever linked with man's eternal struggle for freedom. *Brooklyn Eagle*.

He articulated the dearest and best beliefs that redeem the hard lot of mankind and inspire free men to keep reaching towards the worthiest goals of civilization. *Buffalo Courier Express*.

He was willing to be guided while making up his mind. But once he had decided that a course was right, he went straight through with it, making no compromises for political or other purposes. *Burlington (Vt.) Press*.

The example of Abraham Lincoln and his supporters remains strong today in a world haunted by superstatism. *Cleveland Press*.

Where other historic figures seem remote and aloof from every day life, he is still a part of it. *Grand Rapids Herald*.

Mr. Lincoln stood firmly for individual freedom and initiative, for the right of our citizens to work and live with a minimum of regulation. *Indianapolis News*.

Before we lose the liberty which was won for us on many battlefields, and in many legislative halls we would do well to immerse ourselves in the honest and clear wisdom of America's greatest President. *The Indianapolis Star*.

Abraham Lincoln believed in the people. He believed in the basic goodness of men. He was convinced that mankind's deep sense of justice and fair play was the best hope of the world. *Miami Daily News*.

He stated things clearly, according to his lights. Today the country needs his genius for clarity as much as it was ever needed in the past. *New Haven Journal*.

In a time of sorest need he drew from his simple heritage the strength and courage to lead a nation towards its destiny. *New Haven Register*.

The times made Lincoln—who then exerted great, ennobling influence upon the times. The great leader arose, ready for the dark hour. *Portland Evening Express*.

No matter how swiftly the years may pass he is always the same distance away, his voice as clear, his example as compelling as ever. *Rochester Democrat & Chronicle*.

The soul of Abe Lincoln's greatness was his humanitarianism—his boundless sympathy for the underdog, the little fellow, the victim of misfortune. *Toledo Blade*.

His confidence that in the eternal struggle between right and wrong only right could be victorious, shaped the destiny of the Lincoln who was to save the Union. *Topeka Daily Capitol*.

His doctrines of human aspiration, his hopes his motivations were those upon which all the civilized society of the world has been built. *Washington Evening Star*.

If we are to hold our place in world leadership we must turn again to the principles of such as Abraham Lincoln, who served his time and generation in full measure. *Wichita Eagle*.