

# 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 1057

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

July 11, 1949

## SPURIOUS, HEARSAY AND OBSCURE LINCOLN QUOTATIONS

The compilation of Lincoln's correspondence, writings and recorded speeches, which represents a total wordage greater than the complete works of Shakespeare, or even the Bible, is so voluminous that no exhaustive concordance of them ever has been published. A laborious task confronts one who attempts to locate the time and place when a particular Lincoln axiom or phrase was first used.

Supplementing this large collection of documentary data is an almost unlimited source of hearsay quotations credited to Lincoln, which are scattered through all types of literature from notable biographies to comic magazines. This classification which will always be looked upon with suspicion by objective historians, contains statements said to have been made by Lincoln. Many of them were not recorded verbatim at the time they were supposed to have been spoken, so this classification leads one into the field of folklore and tradition. It contains, very naturally, a tremendous amount of source material which has been woven into the Lincoln story. Here again Lincoln's style of expression must be weighed and the time and place element given serious consideration before it is even admitted as a hearsay item.

Quotations, supposed to have been used by Lincoln, which come to the Foundation for verification and identification are first checked against an extensive card index of timely excerpts from authentic sources. If the staff is unable to discover the origin of the excerpt in these files, a similar catalogue of sayings credited to Lincoln is approached. If still unsuccessful in locating the phrase, the statement is checked against a file labeled "obscure." Here it rests until such a time as further investigation indicates whether it should be added to one of the two above classifications or be labeled "doubtful."

References thus held in suspense are then classified with respect to their probable origin by attempting to decipher the objective which motivated them. There are four main divisions of this series. One compilation suggests that the author was trying to recall an actual statement of Lincoln's with the result that a "paraphrase" quotation is submitted. Other aphorisms imply that a person has attempted to put in his own words a "sentiment" Lincoln is known to have held. A third group of papers suggest that some one has credited an axiom to Lincoln because the quotation sounded like Lincoln's "diction." Still another collection of axioms indicate that they are "spurious," created and issued for any one of a dozen or more propaganda purposes.

First lines of as many examples as room will permit are submitted at the close of paragraphs emphasizing these four groups. The references which accompany them suggest where they may be found, or where their genuineness has been questioned. The Foundation would be pleased to hear from any one who can supply evidence which would support their authenticity.

### PARAPHRASE

Most of the paraphrase quotations are found in the statements Lincoln is alleged to have made with possibly part of the quotation being genuine. This is well illustrated by the many different versions we find of some Lincoln axiom attempting to repeat a Lincoln quotation, without referring to the original statement.

"There is an important service in which the government is distinct from the administration. . . ."

*Sat. Eve. Post* 10-25-41

"Money is the creature of Law. . . ."

*Conquest of Poverty* by McGeer. p. 186.

### SENTIMENT

Some of the most famous of the Lincoln sayings which have become so well known to students of the Emancipator, for lack of an immediate recording, fall into this classification. Only two of this vast number of alleged Lincoln remarks on which more supporting evidence is desired are presented here.

"If I ever get a chance to hit that thing (slavery) I'll hit it hard."

*Herndon & Weik*, p. 64.

"I will get ready and study and then the chance will come."

*Tarbell, Early Life of Abraham Lincoln*, p. 62.

### DICTION

There are a great many quotations credited to Lincoln merely because they seem to be couched in Lincoln's peculiar way of putting things. Any trite saying that has a Lincolnian style of expression would probably be credited to the martyred President.

"I like to see a man proud of the place in which he lives. . . ."

—Quotation on wall of Museum of the City of New York.

"I am not bound to win but I am bound to be true. . . ."

—Advertisement, Michigan Mutual Liability Company, Detroit.

"Teach economy, that is one of the first virtues. It begins with saving money."

—Publication, Fidelity Investment Association, Wheeling, W. Va.

"A lawyer's time and advice are his stock in trade."

—Plaque by the Allen Smith Co., Indianapolis.

### SPURIOUS

When a man achieves the honorable position in the world order that Lincoln has attained, any statement he has made on any controversial subject becomes important. Many of these spurious writings are deliberately penned for the purpose of giving emphasis to viewpoints among political, social, economic and reform groups. (See the forged Lincoln letter used to influence Woodrow Wilson. *Lincoln Lore* No. 615).

"I see in the near future a crisis approaching that unnerves me. . . ."

—American Prophetic League, Inc., Release No. 19.

"All that serves labor serves the nation. All that harms labor is treason. . . ."

*Lincoln Lore*, No. 750.

"If you purchase a ton of steel rails from England. . . ."

*Quarterly Journal of Economics*, May 1921.

"Prohibition will work a great injury to the cause of temperance."

*Lincoln Lore*, No. 552.