

LINCOLN LORE

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MOST TIMELY EDITORIAL—FEBRUARY 12, 1952

Those who serve annually as judges in selecting the "Most Timely Editorial" published on February 12 must have placed special emphasis on the "timeliness" feature in their preferred selection for 1952. The *Portland Maine Evening Express* was awarded the distinction of publishing the chosen editorial which follows:

WE NEED A LINCOLN NOW

A few years ago a poll was taken among 55 leading American historians, asking them to rank all U. S. Presidents in ability and achievement.

In the final tabulation, six were classed as "great" and four as "near great." Abraham Lincoln's name led all the rest, even that of George Washington.

It is not hard to understand why. Abraham Lincoln met the greatest crisis a young growing Nation ever would face: civil war.

A nation defeated by a foreign foe may recover and rise to new strength. A country torn in two may never again command a vital place on the world stage.

For this achievement, Lincoln has the unqualified admiration of the professionals. He brought the United States through its hour of trial, and he did it with the consummate mastery of the statesman who was not above being a politician.

But Lincoln was more than the preserver of unity, more than the courageous helmsman guiding the ship of state through storm and stress.

He was a man of compassion, of deeply human instincts. Though he wielded unparalleled power in Civil War times, he did not dictate. He led.

He had the sympathy and support of ordinary folk because he was sympathetic to them and understood their problems and wants.

Thus Lincoln's greatness has a humble foundation: he was a genius at statecraft, and he was a great leader of men in the fullest and most human sense.

People like to say that America has been lucky, that we always seem to find the man to measure up when the times demand great leadership.

Certainly this has often been true. But the soundness of this general statement is in peril today. For today we face an external foe potentially more dangerous than any we have ever defeated in war. We see a friendly world mired in troubles. To gain such security as can be gained, and to exert our strength for good amid such complexities, we find our Country burdened with expenses more staggering than any nation ever has borne in peacetime (or in what, technically, still is described as peacetime).

All these difficulties cry out for great leadership. Today we do not have such leadership. We have in the White House no Lincoln.

Our Country wants no "man on horseback" in these troubled times, no dictator to follow blindly. It does want, at the head of its Government, a God-fearing man like Lincoln—a wise and kindly man like Lincoln—a man with a sense of history and of this Nation's place in history, like Lincoln.

Perhaps the finest tribute Americans can pay to the memory of the great Civil War President is that expression which so frequently, in time of trouble, rises to their lips:

If only we had another Lincoln, in this day and age!

Excerpts From Other Feb. 12 Editorials

His greatness was rooted in simple truths.—*San Francisco News*.

He was one of the truly great spirits to pass this way.—*Lexington Leader*.

Rising to whatever occasion developed was a Lincoln characteristic.—*Tulsa Daily World*.

No mortal being has meant so much to America as Abraham Lincoln.—*Ohio State Journal*.

Lincoln's performance as President is the classic American political casebook.—*Salt Lake City Deseret News*.

His statesmanship still stands the acid test which separates principle from expediency.—*Bridgeport Post*.

He had no enemies to punish. In fact there was nobody that he recognized as an enemy.—*The Daily Oklahoman*.

He rose to meet and dominate a crisis in which the nation's survival hung in the balance.—*Trenton Evening Times*.

The man symbolizes for us the positive conception of personal goodness and social righteousness.—*The Springfield (Mass.) Union*.

He has become a symbol of deliverance to the oppressed and a figure of admiration to the free.—*Springfield (Ill.) Register*.

His greatness rests upon the qualities of character which men have revered throughout the ages.—*San Diego Tribune*.

He gave himself to his country and to its people, serving them endlessly, asking nothing for himself.—*Syracuse Post Standard*.

He is alive as are few secular heroes in all history. . . . He is alive because he was a man the people loved.—*New York Times*.

This humble man of the earth lived close to the roots of American life; his greatness was the greatness of the people who produced him.—*Indianapolis News*.

The farther Lincoln recedes in time and the more that is written about him the more clearly he stands as the hero of the heirs of this Union.—*Los Angeles Times*.

He looked upon himself as the servant of the people he represented and he reckoned the wishes of these people, public opinion, as the nation's mightiest force.—*Los Angeles Herald Express*.

The humbleness and humility of Abraham Lincoln were not virtues which he exhibited as a pose but were as natural to him as breathing.—*Seattle Post Intelligencer*.

More than any mortal within the record of history, Lincoln brought to his people the common touch, and therein lies the essence of his greatness. He was of the people.—*Detroit Free Press*.

Abraham Lincoln, who had the virtues of honesty, humility, industry in such great measure, proved for once and for all that the common man has in him the image of God.—*Miami Daily News*.