

LINCOLN LORE

Bulletin of the Lincoln National Foundation - - - - - Dr. Louis A. Warren, Editor
Published each week by The Lincoln National Life Insurance Company, Fort Wayne, Indiana

Number 1216

FORT WAYNE, INDIANA

July 28, 1952

THE PRESIDENTIAL NOMINEES' APPRECIATION OF LINCOLN

GENERAL DWIGHT D. EISENHOWER

The most impressive display among all the decorations at the Republican Convention was a colossal portrait of Abraham Lincoln which was placed just in back of the speaker's rostrum. The gavel which was used to call the convention together was made from a rail split by Abraham Lincoln and is the property of the University of Chicago. Nearly every speech of importance made at the convention referred to the first Republican President.

The Republican nominee, General Eisenhower, visited London on June 12, 1945 and made an address which was enthusiastically received. An editorial in a Fort Wayne newspaper which has a deep appreciation of Abraham Lincoln commented on the occasion in these words: "The words he spoke were so simple, so sincere, so eloquent and so human that English writers were reminded of Abraham Lincoln. . . . The comparison to Lincoln did not belittle the great Civil War President. Abe would have been proud of Ike. So are all his countrymen proud of him."

In a Lincoln birthday speech in 1949 General Eisenhower commented on a decided trend towards centralized government that might lead America into a dictatorship. He continued: "Ownership of property will gradually drift into that central government, and finally you have a dictatorship." Eisenhower then urged that we prevent this change in policies "if we are going to be true to the standards that Lincoln gave to all of us." In the conclusion of his address he recalled Lincoln's high sense of public duty and closed his speech with a Lincoln quotation.

Two years ago Eisenhower as president of Columbia University addressed the Columbia Forum on Democracy. He took occasion among other statements to make these comments on Abraham Lincoln:

"We think of him always as the great American. One thing I like to believe about him is this: that he had the proper attitude toward power.

"Lincoln finally came to be the President of the United States at a very special time—in war—when the power devolving upon the President of the United States is so great that if used evilly or to the disadvantage of his fellow citizens, it can become a dictatorship.

"Yet there is nothing in Lincoln's life or in Lincoln's writings that could lead any of us to believe that he felt or believed that he himself was a source of power.

"He was a director of power, a man who might give it a trend in a particular direction, but he had no ambition to associate the source of power with himself and, thereby, to rule others. He served others. That, to me, gave us an example of the true essence of liberty and of freedom.

"He seems to have said: 'I have been given a job to do for the United States. And I will serve in that job to the best of my ability. More I cannot do.'

"Very naturally when we talk about a man so great, of such overwhelming stature, the thought comes to us: 'Well, what relationship has that got to us? We are not Lincolns.' But the principles by which he lived, the faith he had in freedom and liberty, was exemplified, for example, in his very great act, in the emancipation of the slaves.

"His passion for individual liberty of thought, of worship, for freedom to act, freedom of opportunity, is the virtue that each of us can emulate."

GOVERNOR ADLAI E. STEVENSON

The Democratic nominee's point of contact with Lincoln is geographical and genealogical. Both Adlai Stevenson and Abraham Lincoln are claimed by Illinois. Back of Stevenson is a line of ancestors who were closely associated with Abraham Lincoln and all of them interested in politics.

Stevenson's paternal grandfather, Adlai Ewing Stevenson was a supporter of Stephen A. Douglas, who opposed Lincoln for the Senate. He also supported Douglas in the presidential campaign and upon the breaking out of the Civil War opposed Lincoln's policies. He also supported McClellan against Lincoln in the 1864 campaign. The climax of Adlai Ewing Stevenson's long political history was reached when he became Vice-President in Grover Cleveland's second administration.

The great grandfather on the maternal side of candidate Stevenson was Jesse W. Fell, close friend and supporter of Abraham Lincoln. Fell was a staunch Whig and also might be called one of the prime movers in the organization of the Republican party and as early as 1856 held an important position on the national committee. Fell as much as any other one man should receive credit for Lincoln's nomination to the Presidency in 1860. Not only were Gov. Stevenson's remote ancestors interested in politics, but his own father, Lewis Green Stevenson, was politically minded, serving as Secretary of State of Illinois as a Democrat.

Having been brought up in the Lincoln tradition at Bloomington, Ill., Stevenson naturally would become an admirer of the 16th President of the United States. During the celebration this last Lincoln's birthday at Springfield, Ill., Stevenson made some interesting observations which take on new significance with his nomination for the Presidency by the Democratic Party. The opening paragraph of his prepared monograph which appears in *The Abraham Lincoln Quarterly* for June, 1952, is timely indeed. It is submitted along with other excerpts from the address:

"A man in public office can find no surer guide than Lincoln. Personal integrity, surpassing love of country, the loftiest idealism, faith in the people and a passion to serve them well, far-ranging vision, these were the qualities by which he commands our homage, and to which every public leader should aspire. . . .

"The true function of a political leader in a democracy is not to impose his will upon the people but to aid them in making proper choices. . . .

"An informal speech that Lincoln made at Springfield at the end of his campaign against Stephen A. Douglas in 1858 might well adorn the office wall of every public man. . . . (Brief speech of Lincoln)

"Would that every candidate could make such a statement on the eve of our elections. For in such an avowal as that is, a man in public office, or anyone who aspires to office, can find a creed: no personal or party malice; fairness in tactics; toleration of opponents; respect for honest difference of opinion; devotion to country; honest ambition; but utter subordination of self to principle. . . ."