

LINCOLN LORE

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MOST TIMELY EDITORIAL—FEBRUARY 12, 1956

The most timely Lincoln editorial appearing in American newspapers for February 12 has been selected by the Foundation Advisory Group for fourteen consecutive years. Acquired for observation are the newspapers published in all cities of over 100,000 population, also editorials on Lincoln appearing on his birthday in other newspapers which may be received.

An editorial appearing in the *New York Times* on February 12 entitled "Mr. Lincoln" has been selected for recognition this year and through the courtesy of the editor we are able to present it in full in this issue of the bulletin.

There will also appear excerpts from some of the other outstanding editorials bearing on Abraham Lincoln.

MR. LINCOLN

Lincoln's Birthday is a legal holiday in more than thirty American states because the people of those states so desire. No law, no closing of banks or schools, could make anybody celebrate the birthday of a dead President not remembered, loved and respected. The names of some of our Presidents sleep in earned and compassionate forgetfulness.

The men the people choose to remember are those regarded as good and wise. We do not honor the good who are also ineffectual. We do not honor the wise who are unscrupulous. Mr. Lincoln survives as a national hero because of his great tenderness, his humor, his humility, but also because he used these qualities to save the Republic.

The mercy of Lincoln, after all the years, warms our hearts. We like to know he would not willingly let a private soldier be shot for desertion or sleeping on post. We like to think he did not hate the slaveowners he had to fight, and that he also recognized the common humanity in the ex-slaves, dazzled with their new liberty, who followed his armies and thronged about him when he walked in the ashes of Richmond at the end of the war.

But mercy and justice alone would not have saved the nation. Abraham Lincoln, the compassionate, sustained General Grant's hand in the last dreadful grapples of the Civil War, when from the Wilderness to Appomattox ran one long battle and the cost of the victory was not mercy and not justice but blood. Nor should we ever put out of our minds certain passages in the Second Inaugural. Mr. Lincoln then prayed that "this mighty scourge of war might speedily pass away." But he added: "Yet if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn with the sword, as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'"

It is no tribute to a man four score and eleven years dead to offer our feeble guesses as to what he would do and think if he were alive today. We can only suppose that he would defend the constitutional rights of the humblest Negro in Alabama or elsewhere; and that in doing this he would bear no rancor against the good people in the South, of either race, caught in a trap

not of their own devising. We may suppose that in foreign relations he would be patient, hating war as he did, but that he would not sacrifice principles for security, loving freedom as he did.

Beyond all this, today's Americans, five times as numerous as the Americans of the Eighteen Sixties, would feel that they could talk to Mr. Lincoln if he could be here to listen, and this fact nobody really can explain. It is deep in the American past and, as we hope, foreshadows the long American future.

EXCERPTS FROM OTHER FEB. 12 EDITORIALS

The more he is examined, scrutinized, and analyzed the more impressively he towers.—*Dayton Journal Herald*.

The world urgently needs men who will do what is right—not what is expedient.—*Salt Lake Desert News*.

While letting his mind soar to brilliant heights, Lincoln never took his feet from the ground.—*Antigo (Wis.) Daily Journal*.

His early life had fitted him for the realistic and common sense decisions he had to make.—*St. Paul Pioneer Press*.

We are better for his having lived, and our heritage is solid for his having cemented the Union.—*Columbus Dispatch*.

The historic greatness of Lincoln shines out against the dark framework of the time in which he lived.—*Buffalo Courier Express*.

There was much that is solid democratic philosophy about his career that deserves sober recall and consideration.—*Hartford Courant*.

We must never lose our faith in his high principles, in his wisdom and his justice towards mankind.—*Los Angeles Herald Express*.

Had Mr. Lincoln lived, perhaps many of the issues that disturb us today, would have been resolved by his understanding.—*Akron Beacon Journal*.

It may be that his greatness lay in the absence of all sham from his make-up. His simplicity was not a pose.—*New Haven Register*.

Child of the people he was and is. The common people claim him for their own and will not be parted from him.—*Washington (D. C.) Star*.

Mr. Lincoln was a man inspired by a cause, and it was the fact which gave strength at times when the world looked dark.—*San Diego Union*.

Wherever men are blessed with freedom, or yearn to attain it, the name of Abraham Lincoln evokes deep reverence and gratitude.—*Baltimore American*.

Lincoln has given to his time and to posterity the continuing inspiration of undying words and of a nobility of character.—*Trenton Times Advertiser*.

Lincoln was an American nationalist in the sense that he was a unionist. But his significance was international, universal, timeless.—*Indianapolis News*.

Perhaps it is time to remind ourselves that Lincoln's greatest concern was in preserving the Union, although the freeing of the slaves was a more dramatic move.—*Cincinnati Times Star*.

His genius endures to animate lesser clay, to sit in the counsels of enlightenment and to appeal always to the better angels which reside in the natures of all of us.—*Wichita Eagle*.