

# LINCOLN LORE

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## MOST TIMELY EDITORIAL—FEBRUARY 12, 1951

A composition in the *Washington Post* entitled "Commemorating Lincoln" was awarded first place by the Foundation advisory group for the most timely editorial appearing in the American daily press for February 12, 1951. The editors of the Military Order of the Loyal Legion have also observed the timeliness of the above selected editorial and it appears on the first page of the current issue of their bulletin.

### Commemorating Lincoln

Obviously there is little significance in celebrating the birthday anniversary of Abraham Lincoln unless the commemoration takes the form of service to the ideals for which he labored. Either the philosophy which he expressed in his inaugural addresses and in the speech at Gettysburg is precious to the American community or it is not. If less worthy doctrines claim our allegiance and we yield obedience to them, we should abandon the pretense of loyalty to the Emancipator. Certainly the present period of our history is one in which we need the conceptions which he set forth. We, too, "are engaged in a great . . . war," and we "are met on a great battlefield of that war." To us, as to our forefathers, it is a question whether a nation dedicated to liberty and equality can endure. Our free democracy is challenged by a rampant materialism, framed to defy the spiritual impact of fellowship under social law. The conflict between the power represented by Lincoln and that of the modern monolithic state is the primary issue of the prevailing hour. People are dying in the struggle, and people are living under its blight in slavery hardly less endurable than death.

The world, and not merely America, requires what the Emancipator called "a new birth of freedom," a renaissance of the elemental principles of liberty in practice. He spoke for "government of the people, by the people, for the people" not simply in the United States. The next—and the equally important—thought of his pronouncement at Gettysburg was an affirmation for the entire world. He appealed for democracy for all the nations of the earth. Fourscore and seven years later, we strive today in Korea for the ideal. Tomorrow the fighting front may be universal. If so, our aim and our hope must be as large. Otherwise, there is no point in remembering Lincoln.

But our purpose never can be what communism is—a selfish dogma of class hatred and violence, minority dictation, narrowly partisan rule. Here in the city of Washington the American commonwealth has created a Memorial for its sixteenth President in which the elements of his religion of freedom and mutuality are announced in his own words. He speaks from its walls, explaining the issue which caused the war in which he also was to die. The contest arose from an economic interest of vast social and cultural connotations. So in our era a selfish factor is the basis of contention on an expanded and aggravated scale. Lincoln answers it in the name of liberty and in contradiction of enslavement, even for the alleged benefit of the enslaved. Then, at the end, he re-dedicating himself—and us—in the beautiful, inspiring words: "With malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in." But he does not vision only the conclusion of the struggle of 1861 to 1865. No, his mind goes forward into the ages, and he commits his country to the sacred task of world leadership for freedom, co-operation

and progress in the injunction: "Do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves and with all nations."

That is what Lincoln means to us on his birthday in 1951; either that or nothing.

### TIMELY SAYINGS

Excerpts from some of the editorials which came to the attention of the committee follow:

The great passion of Lincoln's life was to save the Union.—*Sacramento Bee*

He loved his country better than any of its component parts.—*New Haven Journal Courier*

His was the voice of courage, of confidence, and yet of compassion.—*Jacksonville Journal*

Pre-eminently he expressed in his life the spirit and the opportunity of America.—*Oregonian*

Abraham Lincoln was a great man. We don't have to prove it, the world knows it.—*Salt Lake City Deseret News*

The man symbolizes for us the positive conception of personal goodness and social righteousness.—*New York Times*

We can thank God the spirit of Lincoln still lives to challenge our conscience and unite our will.—*Bridgeport Post*

Much of what he said during his lifetime in politics is timeless. It applies as well to today's problems as it did to yesterday's.—*Indianapolis Star*

Lincoln moved through the turmoil (Civil War) calmly. If he was dismayed or dispirited at times he did not let it slacken his purpose.—*Salt Lake City Tribune*

Lincoln gave little heed to political advantage when he made decisions. He did what was right and best for the greatest number of people.—*Peoria Journal*

Yet it is part of the quality of the man, his universality, that so many should turn to him, so long after his death, for wisdom and inspiration.—*New York Herald Tribune*

Is there one among us who can match his moral vigor and his political wisdom? Is there one who so deeply believed in the basic goodness of men?—*Fort Wayne News-Sentinel*

He still looms as large as ever, and more substantially, as a matter of attested record, as one of the ablest, most devoted, most resolute, and ultimately wisest of them all.—*Waterbury (Conn.) American*

He had courage sufficient to endure the day and wisdom to meet its clamoring problems and perplexities. His humility, his tolerance, his humor, his habit of prayer were all dedicated to today.—*Philadelphia Evening Bulletin*

Compared to Lincoln, most of our leaders today are men with feet of clay. They do not have the vision, the angry intolerance of wrong, the determination and perseverance in fighting evil, the integrity and high principles that Abraham Lincoln brought to any task to which he was assigned.—*Syracuse Post Standard*