

The original documents are located in Box 24, “3/5/76 - Remarks at Dedication of Visitor's Center at Lincoln Home, Springfield, Illinois” of the President’s Speeches and Statements: Reading Copies at the Gerald R. Ford Presidential Library.

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THE PRESIDENT ~~1~~ HAS ~~SEEN~~....

IT IS GREAT TO BE BACK. IN THE LAND OF LINCOLN.

HAVING BEEN A LIFE-LONG ADMIRER OF LINCOLN,

I AM HONORED TO PARTICIPATE IN THE CEREMONY TODAY

TO UNCOVER THE CORNERSTONE AT THE LINCOLN VISITORS' CENTER.

I HAVE WARM MEMORIES OF MY MANY VISITS TO ILLINOIS
IN THE LAST 19 MONTHS AS PRESIDENT. INCLUDING THE DEDICATION
OF THE DIRKSEN LIBRARY IN PEKIN, THE WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE
IN PEORIA, THE LES ARENDS TRIBUTE IN MELVIN,
IN SKOKIE FOR THE MAYORS CONFERENCE, ALONG WITH SEVERAL
VISITS TO CHICAGO.

. . . NATION'S NUMBER ONE AGRICULTURAL EXPORTING STATE

. . . NATION'S NUMBER ONE CORN AND SOY PRODUCING
STATE

Jerry

THE PRESIDENT HAS SEEN....

DEDICATION OF CORNERSTONE OF VISITORS' CENTER

AT LINCOLN HOME, SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

FRIDAY, MARCH 5, 1976

-1-

IT HAS BEEN SAID THAT MORE WORDS HAVE BEEN WRITTEN
ABOUT ABRAHAM LINCOLN THAN ABOUT ANY OTHER AMERICAN.
CERTAINLY MORE SPEECHES HAVE BEEN MADE ABOUT HIM, ESPECIALLY
BY CANDIDATES IN ELECTION CAMPAIGNS, AND I CONFESS
I HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF THIS MYSELF ON NUMEROUS OCCASIONS.

I REMEMBER MY FIRST VISIT TO THIS HOUSE ABOUT
A DOZEN YEARS AGO IN THE COMPANY OF MY GOOD FRIEND
PAUL FINDLEY AND THE LATE SENATOR DIRKSEN, WHO WAS ABOUT
THE BEST STORY-TELLER TO COME OUT OF CENTRAL ILLINOIS
SINCE LINCOLN HIMSELF.

I HAD JUST BEEN ELECTED REPUBLICAN LEADER OF THE HOUSE
OF REPRESENTATIVES AND "EV" WAS TEACHING ME SOMETHING
ABOUT THE TRADE, / SINCE HE HAD BEEN REPUBLICAN LEADER
OF THE SENATE FOR SIX YEARS.

I CAN'T REMEMBER WHAT I SAID ABOUT ABRAHAM LINCOLN

THAT DAY IN SPRINGFIELD, BUT I DO REMEMBER THE DIFFICULTY

I HAD TRYING TO PUT HIM INTO WORDS. CARL SANDBURG AND

OTHERS HAVE SPENT WHOLE LIFETIMES IN THIS EFFORT, AND ALMOST

EVERYTHING THERE IS TO SAY ABOUT LINCOLN HAS BEEN SAID

MANY TIMES BEFORE, AND PROBABLY MUCH BETTER.

NOBODY EVER HAS BEEN ABLE TO CAPTURE HIS GREAT SPIRIT FULLY

IN A FEW SENTENCES -- EVEN HIS OWN ELOQUENT SENTENCES

CANNOT EXPLAIN LINCOLN'S UNIVERSAL APPEAL TO HUMAN HEARTS.

THERE IS A STORY ABOUT A YOUNG FAMILY VISITING
THE LINCOLN MEMORIAL IN WASHINGTON. THE MOTHER LEANS
OVER TO HER LITTLE GIRL, ABOUT THREE OR FOUR, AND POINTS UP
TO THE WHITE MARBLE STATUE.

"NOW YOU KNOW WHO THAT IS, DON'T YOU?" SHE ASKS.

QUICK AS A FLASH THE CHILD ANSWERS:

"OH YES. HE'S MY FRIEND."

WHETHER THAT STORY IS TRUE OR NOT, IT EXPLAINS A LOT.

EVERY AMERICAN FEELS THAT HE OR SHE KNOWS ABRAHAM LINCOLN
IN A PERSONAL WAY -- AS SURELY AS HIS SPRINGFIELD NEIGHBORS
DID / WHEN HE BID THEM A LAST FAREWELL BEFORE TAKING THE TRAIN
TO WASHINGTON.

ALL ALONG THE WAY, PEOPLE CALLED OUT TO HIM
AS "ABE" -- SOMETIMES "OLD ABE" -- THOUGH HE WAS ONLY 52.
IT WAS A TERM OF AFFECTION, / JUST AS "IKE" WAS FOR
PRESIDENT EISENHOWER / OR "EV" FOR SENATOR DIRKSEN.

THE WONDER IS THAT THIS COMMUNION BETWEEN LINCOLN AND

THE PEOPLE, SO EVIDENT IN HIS OWN TIME, CONTINUES TO THIS DAY.

HIS AMAZING ABILITY TO COMMUNICATE SOME OF HIS OWN CALM COURAGE

AND COMPASSION TO HIS FELLOW-COUNTRYMEN -- ACROSS MORE THAN

A CENTURY -- SETS ABRAHAM LINCOLN APART FROM ALL THE GREAT

AMERICANS WHOSE NAMES WE HONOR.

OTHERS ARE LEGENDS.

LINCOLN IS REAL.

HE IS ESPECIALLY REAL HERE IN SPRINGFIELD,

THE HOME TOWN THAT SHAPED HIS POLITICAL CAREER, THE CAPITOL

CITY WHERE HIS "HOUSE DIVIDED" SPEECH STRUCK THE CONSCIENCE

OF THE NATION.

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IF WE WERE VISITING MOUNT VERNON, AND THE GHOST
OF GEORGE WASHINGTON SUDDENLY APPEARED, I'M SURE WE WOULD
ALL STAND TO ATTENTION UNTIL HE SPOKE FIRST.

BUT HERE, I ALMOST EXPECT MR. LINCOLN HIMSELF
TO OPEN THAT DOOR AND INVITE US IN TO SIT A SPELL.

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YOU MAY HAVE HEARD ABOUT THE LINCOLN GHOST
THAT IS SUPPOSED TO HAUNT THE WHITE HOUSE.

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FRANKLY, I'M NOT MUCH OF A BELIEVER IN GHOSTS MYSELF,
AND I'VE NEVER SEEN ANY, INCLUDING THE LINCOLN GHOST.
BUT I CAN TELL YOU THAT THE PRESENCE OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN IS SURELY
THERE IN THE WHITE HOUSE, PERHAPS MORE THAN THAT
OF ANY OTHER PRESIDENT.

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IT IS A COMFORTING PRESENCE -- GENTLY REMINDING
HIS SUCCESSORS THAT NO MATTER HOW WORRISOME,
NONE OF THEIR TROUBLES CAN BE WORSE THAN HE FACED,
NONE OF THEIR CRITICS MORE CRUEL, NONE OF THEIR DECISIONS
MORE DIFFICULT.

I KNOW YOU WILL APPRECIATE HOW MUCH ENCOURAGEMENT
I FIND TODAY IN LINCOLN'S PHILOSOPHICAL REPLY TO POLITICAL
ATTACKS ON HIS LEADERSHIP. HE TOLD A VISITOR AT THE WHITE
HOUSE: "IF I WERE TO TRY TO READ, MUCH LESS ANSWER,
ALL THE ATTACKS MADE ON ME, THIS SHOP MIGHT AS WELL BE CLOSED
FOR ANY OTHER BUSINESS.

"I DO THE VERY BEST I KNOW HOW -- THE VERY BEST
I CAN, AND I MEAN TO KEEP DOING SO UNTIL THE END.

"IF THE END BRINGS ME OUT ALL RIGHT, WHAT IS
SAID AGAINST ME WON'T AMOUNT TO ANYTHING."

ABRAHAM LINCOLN KEPT ON DOING THE VERY BEST

HE KNEW HOW. HE STUCK TO HIS STEADY COURSE AND

HE SAVED THE UNION. WHAT SUSTAINED HIM? I'LL TELL YOU --

HIS FAITH IN THE ULTIMATE JUSTICE OF THE PEOPLE.

"IS THERE ANY BETTER OR EQUAL HOPE IN THE WORLD?"

HE ASKED.

I STILL BELIEVE THERE IS NO BETTER HOPE.

THE STRENGTH AND WISDOM OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE HAVE BECOME

THE HOPE OF FREE MEN EVERYWHERE. THE GREAT LEGACY

OF ABRAHAM LINCOLN IS THAT GOVERNMENT OF THE PEOPLE,

BY THE PEOPLE, FOR THE PEOPLE, DID NOT PERISH BUT ENDURES

HERE IN THESE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

OURS IS A MORE PERFECT UNION THAN

THE FOUNDING FATHERS CREATED, BECAUSE OF THIS ONE MAN.

IT IS TO ABRAHAM LINCOLN THAT WE OWE THE OPPORTUNITY

TO OBSERVE OUR NATIONAL BICENTENNIAL/AT PEACE AMONG OURSELVES

AND WITH ALL NATIONS.

THANK YOU.

END OF TEXT