

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

FEBRUARY 12, 1976

OFFICE OF THE WHITE HOUSE PRESS SECRETARY

THE WHITE HOUSE

REMARKS OF THE PRESIDENT
AT THE
LINCOLN MEMORIAL

12:35 P.M. EST

Mr. Hunt, Secretary Kleppe, Mr. Ambassador, Mr. Ralph Edwards, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen:

At the outset may I congratulate Richard Barnes for his winning essay and the views that he has expressed in it, and may I also, at the same time, congratulate those who participated but who did not win, because the effort by many, I think, is what we want, even though the competition ends up with just one winner. But the net result is that all of us win by this kind of an effort, but congratulations to you personally, Richard.

May I also express my thanks to all the members of the various patriotic organizations represented here for the opportunity to join you in this Bicentennial tribute to Abraham Lincoln on the 167th anniversary of his birth. In time, Lincoln was closer to the American Revolution than we are to the Civil War.

His grandfather in Virginia heard the news, the great news from Philadelphia in 1776. Only four score and seven years have passed when President Lincoln stood among the graves in Gettysburg.

To the young Lincoln growing to manhood in Kentucky, Indiana and Illinois, Jefferson's ringing truths, the Declaration of Independence, were exciting and very real -- that all men are created equal. That they are endowed by their creator with certain unalienable rights: life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.

Among his many gifts of greatness, Abraham Lincoln had almost a mystic ability to find deep meaning in the tumultuous events that swirled about him. His expression of these insights in words that some called dull and dishwatery when they were spoken are inscribed on these walls and in the hearts of his countrymen.

MORE

But it is less for the power of his words that we honor Lincoln than for the force of his faith in America and in the people of this great republic. He saw the political system created by the Constitution as a definitive answer to the ancient debate about the ability of man to govern himself in freedom. The worth and the will of Government in Washington was being questioned and assailed all around him. But even as Americans struggled in bloody battles with other Americans over the issues the founding fathers had failed to resolve, President Lincoln was able to declare, "It is my confident hope and belief that this system will be found, after sufficient trials, to be better adapted everywhere than any other to the great interest of human society; namely, the preservation of peace, order and national prosperity."

And after more than sufficient trial, the Union was saved and the republic endures.

It is to Abraham Lincoln that we owe the opportunity to observe our National Bicentennial peace among ourselves and with all nations.

Today, we rededicate ourselves to the values and to the goals for which Abraham Lincoln lived and died -- that this Nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom and that Government of the people, by the people, for the people shall not perish from the earth.

END (AT 12:38 P.M. EST)