

I hope you won't mind if I depart a little from the usual character of the Senate Report that comes to you every week and I do so for a reason, because we are about to observe an anniversary which has special significance to the Middle West and I should say extraordinary significance to the State of Illinois for as you so well know on the 12th of February, we mark the 148th anniversary of the birth of Abraham Lincoln. I think therefore, it is most appropriate that we say something about it, relate him of course to the things that are before the country today.

There will be wreaths on the statues that adorn the rotunda of the Capitol and there will be wreaths in the Lincoln Memorial built with the money gathered from the forty-eight states, or there will be Lincoln dinners all over the United States of America. There will be an endless procession of visitors to the shrines of Lincoln and its only testimony I think to the growth of Lincoln in the consciousness not only in this country but of the whole wide world.

The only poll that I have ever encountered to show how he stands in the minds of the American people seems to have been taken in 1940. Now it is a little invidious of course to compare one hero with another but on that occasion they polled 6,000 people in New York, and Lincoln stood out over and above anyone in American history as the favorite hero and as the greatest person ever to be produced by the United States of America. Now of course, the common reasons will be assigned for his greatness. First of all his bigness in little things, you remember that wonderful letter he wrote to Mrs. Bixby, the woman who gave five sons on the altar of the Republic during the Civil War. It was a touching and pathetic masterpiece and yet this big man could take time to write to this mother of five sons who were sacrificed for the nation. Then of course there is the fact that he is an exalted common man. What great inspiration there must be for common men if we think of them as such, every where in the world because here was a common man who reached the supreme heights and who in the judgment of H. G. Wells was one of the fine greatest characters that mankind ever produced. And then there is that remarkable attribute of character, his freedom from anger and temper. No where is it so beautifully done as in his second Inaugural. Remember those lovely words, with malice toward none, with charity for all, with firmness in the right as God gives us to see the right. What an opportunity there was for anger and temper and what an opportunity there was for crimination and yet this humble person free from anger and temper in this magnificent second Inaugural just laid his heart and his soul there to the people. That was part of the greatness of the man.

And so, all these things are aside as a part of the greatness of Lincoln. But I want to visit with you a little today, about some other heroic qualities for in my judgment he is not merely a great man, he is not merely a great statesman, he is a courageous hero. So let us look at some of the incidents that would fortify that estimate.

First I would remind you of his controversy with Horace Greeley the great editor in New York. This happened in August of 1862. Lincoln said we had the right estimate of Greeley for he said on one occasion that Greeley's newspaper was worth 100,000 truths, so he knew the influence of the New York

Tribune but in 1862, Greeley was obviously incensed and irritated over the progress of the war and over the alleged fact that Lincoln hadn't done enough about the institution of slavery, and the net result was that he finally wrote his so called prayer or appeal of the 20 million, and in it he castigated Lincoln, said he hadn't been carrying out his executive duties, that he was a disappointment to those who had triumphed in his election, that they were sorely and deeply pained over the fact that he had not done anything much about this hideous institution of slavery.

Now if Lincoln did not have the heart of a lion, if he were only a politician how easy it would have been for him to have caved in under the impact of this appeal that reached all the corners of the country. But he didn't cave in. There was a self trust about Lincoln that was the foundation for his sense of mission and his sense of destiny. So in due course he sent Mr. Greeley a note. What Greeley didn't know at the time, of course, was that the emancipation proclamation had already been written in long hand by Lincoln. It had not been publicized or did he ever say it to Greeley at the time. But, in his response to Greeley's prayer, Lincoln simply said this "My paramount object is to save the Union. If I can save it by freeing the slaves I'll do that. If I can save the Union by not freeing the slaves I'll do that. If I can save the Union by freeing some and not others, that I shall do. If I can save the Union by doing more or doing less that I shall do." So you see his whole soul, his inflexible soul was on the subject of saving the Union and therein marked him in his devotion to the destiny of this nation and the great sense of mission that he had. I sometimes believe that that kind of self trust we can well use in this rather feverish and delicate day and age for in proportion as individually and in groups we have a sense of self trust and a sense of mission and realize that America is the beachhead and the guardian of freedom. Even as in Lincoln's time there was this question of the survival of the union so I think we better articulate our responsibility as the greatest nation on the face of the earth. So you see that makes him a courageous hero.

And then secondly his estimate of the responsibilities in the objects of government. It was in 1854 when he made a statement. You see, it was four years later before he was a candidate for the United States Senate. He had not yet come off the national scene except that he served one term in Congress in 1847. but in 1854 he said in substance "the legitimate function of government is to do what needs to be done for people". I emphasize it what needs to be done for people that they cannot do so well or do at all in their individual capacity. Then he proceeded to tackle on some of these things. He said for instance, law enforcement the machinery of government, of highways, schools, charities, pauperism, orphanages, helping afflicted and helpless children. Lincoln just recited it, there was a field that was the legitimate object of government. So today as you spell out some of these patterns that are freely criticized it seems to me that only in a larger dimension do we carry out some of the things Lincoln said were the legitimate object of government. so you see there is a newness and a freshness about him and in that respect he stands apart from so many heroes. There are heroes in the history books who were equal to the occasion of their times but Lincoln was not only equal to his time but you see he grows in the estimate of people and there is a vitality and a freshness about his concepts that are just as good in the year of our Lord 1957, as they were in the year 1809, when

continued - in the year 1809 when he

he was born in that log cabin in Kentucky. Now I think there is time to mention one other thing to fortify my estimate of Lincoln's greatness and a courageous hero and it is his capacity for change. Let's look for a moment at 1862, first came this controversy with Greeley, secondly the war was going badly, the credit of the union was shaken, the people were so upset about the casualty list, and then on top of everything else of course he had to relieve General McClellan from his command as the commander of the Army of the Potomac. He didn't like to do it but he did it as a last resort. And then in December of 1862 he came to Congress to deliver his second annual message and in that message he used these terms, and to me they are wonderful I think I can quote it accurately. He said, "the dogmas of the quiet task are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion as our case is new so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves and then we shall save our country." It's a wonderful paragraph the dogmas of the quiet task are inadequate to the stormy present. What is dogma? Oh, a certain opinion and today there is so much opinion of all kinds. But is it adequate to the stormy present and this is a stormy present? The situation in the Pacific, the situation in the Middle East, the survival of our own country, all these problems, all these elements finally add up so that we can say with him the dogmas of the quiet task are inadequate to the stormy present and then we can go on even as he said in 1862, in December, the occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion. Is there anyone who will deny that these are difficult days and difficult occasions and that they call for prudence and wisdom and prayerful judgment in meeting our responsibilities all in the interest of our security and the survival of our country. So you see the occasion is piled high with difficulty and we must rise with the occasion and then when he said as our case is new so we must think anew and act anew, that's a responsibility in every catenation, we have to put off some of the old thinking and think newly about the new problems.

And then that last sentence "we must disenthrall ourselves and then we shall save our country". Disenthrall, oh he could have said disenslave because it means the same thing, what he meant was we must disenthrall or disenslave our thinking and get a freer, newer kind of thought in concept and then we shall save our country.

So today survival is an important issue in the face of all these amazing challenges in the world so we must disenthrall our thinking and then we shall save freedoms beachhead in an hour when aggression is loose in the world and when there is a concerted effort of course, to destroy the very vitality and essence of this country which is freedom.

So Abraham Lincoln, 148 years after his birth, a fresh, how vital and how modern. We can stand some of his courage and we can stand to go back and re-examine the concepts by which he kept this Union alive and also solve one of the great unsolved problems of the Constitution and that was the problem of slavery. Well then can we commemorate his birth anniversary and feel this throb of Lincoln as we enshrine him in our minds and in our hearts.