

LINCOLN DAY SPEECH

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BAKERSFIELD, CALIFORNIA - FEBRUARY 12, 1982

IT IS CUSTOMARY, OF COURSE, TO BEGIN THESE AFFAIRS WITH PRAISE FOR ABRAHAM LINCOLN. BUT THIS YEAR, I THINK WHAT WE WOULD SAY ABOUT LINCOLN IS LESS IMPORTANT THAN WHAT HE WOULD SAY ABOUT US. UNFORTUNATELY, THAT MUST BE A MATTER OF CONJECTURE: PRESIDENT LINCOLN, UNLIKE SOME MORE RECENT OCCUPANTS OF THE OVAL OFFICE, DID NOT TAPE HIS CONVERSATIONS THERE. APPARENTLY, HE CARED LESS ABOUT HISTORY THAN SOME OF HIS SUCCESSORS. SADLY, WE'LL NEVER KNOW WHAT HE THOUGHT ABOUT MARY TODD'S BILLS FOR HANDGLOVES, OR HOW THE STRATEGIC DECISIONS THAT PRECEDED GETTYSBURG AND ANTIETAM WERE ARRIVED AT.

YET SO FAR, AT LEAST; THIS SHOCKING DISREGARD TO LATER HISTORIANS HAS NOT PREVENTED LINCOLN FROM EARNING A PRETTY FAIR

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POSITION IN OUR NATIONAL LIFE. WHO KNOWS, SOME DAY EVEN ARTHUR SCHLESINGER MAY ATTEMPT A LINCOLN BIOGRAPHY? BUT UNTIL THEN, WE ARE LEFT WITH LITTLE MORE THAN LINCOLN'S WORDS AND DEEDS BY WHICH TO JUDGE THE MAN - OR ASK HIM TO JUDGE US.

"THE DOGMAS OF A QUIET PAST ARE INADEQUATE TO THE STORMY PRESENT," HE SAID IN THE SECOND YEAR OF THE CIVIL WAR. "THE OCCASION IS PILED HIGH WITH DIFFICULTY - AND WE MUST RISE WITH THE OCCASION. WE MUST DISENTHRALL OURSELVES, AND THEN WE SHALL SAVE OUR COUNTRY."

ROLLING BACK THE STORM CLOUDS

IN THE LAST YEAR, WE HAVE BEGUN TO CAST ASIDE MANY OF THE DOGMAS OF A PAST NO LONGER RELEVANT TO THE STORMY PRESENT. WE HAVE DISENTHRALLED OURSELVES FROM THE EXHAUSTED REMEDIES OF YESTERDAY. AND WE HAVE BEGUN TO MOVE OUT FROM THE SHADOW OF AN

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ATTITUDE THAT ENSHINED GOVERNMENT AS THE ONLY FORCE CAPABLE OF SOLVING OUR PROBLEMS OR REALIZING OUR DREAMS. FIFTY YEARS AGO, IN THE CENTER OF ANOTHER STORM, THE AMERICAN PEOPLE TURNED TO THEIR GOVERNMENT FOR THE FIRST TIME FOR FOOD, SHELTER AND A RAY OF HOPE IN A WORLD GONE DARK. THAT GOVERNMENT RESPONDED WITH EMERGENCY MEASURES. WE SURVIVED THE GREAT DEPRESSION. WE WON A GREAT WORLD WAR. BUT FOR GOVERNMENT, THAT WAS NOT ENOUGH.

THE INNOVATIONS OF THE THIRTIES BECAME THE DOGMAS OF ALL THE YEARS TO FOLLOW. GOVERNMENT ITSELF BECAME ONE GIGANTIC ASSEMBLY LINE OF MASS-PRODUCED VIRTUE. IT PURSUED COMPASSION WITH A VENGEANCE - AND FORGOT THAT COMPASSION WITHOUT COMPETENCE IS A

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FORMULA FOR ECONOMIC DISASTER. IT CONFUSED OUR DREAMS WITH MERE SLEEPWALKING. IT GREW TOO BIG, TOO REMOTE, TOO MIRED IN ITS OWN BUREAUCRATIC SPIDER'S WEBB. IT BECAME THE SINGLE BIGGEST NEGATIVE FACTOR IN AN ECONOMY DULLED TO THE POINT OF NON-COMPETITIVENESS, AND A FOREIGN POLICY COMPOSED MOSTLY OF WISHFUL THINKING AND CROSSED FINGERS.

THAT WAS AMERICA A LITTLE MORE THAN A YEAR AGO - BEFORE RONALD REAGAN ASSUMED OFFICE AND EXERTED LEADERSHIP. THERE'S AN OLD SAYING IN POLITICS, THAT THE BEST WAY TO STOP A POLITICIAN DEAD IN HIS TRACKS IS TO ELECT HIM. OBVIOUSLY, WHOEVER SAID THAT NEVER MET PRESIDENT REAGAN.

THE NEW BEGINNING

SUDDENLY, THE OLD DOGMAS WERE BEING REPLACED WITH NEW EXPERIMENTS. THE COUNTRY RESPONDED, AND WHY NOT? STOP TO THINK: IN BARELY A YEAR, ONE MAN HAS MANAGED TO RESTORE LUSTER TO THE PRESI-

DENCY, DIRECTION TO GOVERNMENT, AND THE FIRST INSTALLMENT OF ABOUT \$750 BILLION TO THE POCKETS OF THE AMERICAN TAXPAYER. NOT A BAD START, I THINK YOU'LL AGREE.

AND THAT'S ONLY THE BEGINNING. A YEAR AGO, THE INFLATION RATE HOVERED ABOVE 12%. TODAY, IT'S BELOW 9% - AND HEADED STILL LOWER. A YEAR AGO, INTEREST RATES WERE TOPPING OUT AT 21%. TODAY, THEY'RE FIVE POINTS LOWER - AND WITH A LITTLE LUCK, AND MORE THAN A LITTLE RESTRAINT ON THE PART OF THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT, THEY SHOULD FALL ANOTHER POINT OR TWO BY MID-YEAR. A YEAR AGO, THE FEDERAL BUDGET WAS GROWING AT AN ANNUAL RATE OF 14%. TODAY, THE FIGURE HAS BEEN CUT NEARLY IN HALF - WITHOUT SACRIFICING THE TRULY NEEDY, OR SHREDDING THE SAFETY NET STRETCHED OUT BY A COMPASSIONATE PEOPLE.

A YEAR AGO, AMERICAN BUSINESS WAS DROWNING IN A SEA OF RED TAPE - AND AMERICAN CONSUMERS WERE BEING SADDLED WITH AN ANNUAL REGULATORY BILL OF A HUNDRED BILLION DOLLARS OR MORE. TODAY, THE FEDERAL REGISTER IS 30% SLIMMER - AMERICAN ENTERPRISE HAS A CAPITAL

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POOL 3 TO 5 BILLION DOLLARS LARGER - AND TAXPAYERS HAVE BEEN SAVED AT LEAST \$2 BILLION IN FRAUD, WASTE AND ABUSE. FOR THE FIRST TIME EVER, THE REGULATORS ARE BEING REGULATED THEMSELVES.

A YEAR AGO, MESMERIZED BY SOVIET EXPANSION, AMERICA LURCHED HER WAY THROUGH A CONFUSED AND CONTRADICTORY FOREIGN POLICY. TODAY, THE MYTH OF SOVIET INVULNERABILITY IS AT LAST BEING CHALLENGED. AMERICA ONCE AGAIN IS BEHAVING LIKE A GREAT NATION, WITH GREAT RESPONSIBILITIES. WE KNOW THAT PEACE IS OUR PARAMOUNT OBJECTIVE, BUT WE ALSO UNDERSTAND THAT MILITARY STRENGTH IS THE ONLY SURE MEANS OF PRESERVING IT. WITH HIS SWEEPING PROPOSAL TO CONTROL NUCLEAR ARMS IN EUROPE, THE PRESIDENT HAS STIRRED FRESH HOPE IN THE WORLD. WITH HIS PERFORMANCE AT SUMMIT MEETINGS IN CANADA AND CUNCUN, HE'S DISPLAYED A GIFT FOR COMMON SENSE DIPLOMACY - WITHOUT THE STRIPED PANTS.

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A PRESIDENT IN THE BULLY PULPIT

ALL THOSE ACCOMPLISHMENTS ARE ON THE RECORD. BUT EVEN THEY DON'T CONVEY THE SCALE OF CHANGE NOW UNDERWAY. FIRST AND FOREMOST, THE PRESIDENCY IS THE BULLY PULPIT TEDDY ROOSEVELT ANNOUNCED IT TO BE. IT'S AN OFFICE WHERE MORAL AUTHORITY OUTWEIGHS POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY. AND THEREIN LIES RONALD REAGAN'S GREATEST SINGLE CONTRIBUTION THUS FAR. THIS PRESIDENT DOES NOT DUCK, STRADDLE OR DODGE ISSUES. IF YOU DOUBT THAT, TALK TO AN AIR TRAFFIC CONTROLLER WHO BROKE THE LAW AND WALKED OUT ON THE PUBLIC. ASK THE LITTLE GIRL IN IOWA WHOM HE RESCUED FROM A CRUEL TANGLE OF MEDICAID REGULATION. CHECK BACK WITH TIP O'NEILL, WHO A YEAR AGO ADVISED THE NEW PRESIDENT THAT HE WAS IN THE BIG LEAGUES - ONLY TO FIND THAT IT WAS HE, NOT THE PRESIDENT, WHO GOT SENT TO THE SHOWERS EARLY. ASK THE FRIENDLY FOLKS WHO BROUGHT YOU A TRILLION DOLLAR DEFICIT, DOUBLE-DIGIT INFLATION, STUBBORN UNEMPLOYMENT, AND CARPING CRITICISM IN LIEU OF CONSTRUCTIVE OPPOSITION.

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THESE ARE THE SAME GUYS WHO FOR FORTY YEARS HAVE PLAYED THE SHELL GAME OF GIVING BACK TO THE VOTERS WITH ONE HAND. ONLY PART OF WHAT INFLATION AND BRACKET-CREEP STEAL AWAY WITH THE OTHER. THEY WOULDN'T KNOW A SURPLUS IF IT JUMPED OVER THE WASHINGTON MONUMENT. THEY'VE FORGOTTEN HOW TO PRONOUNCE WORDS LIKE PROFIT AND INCENTIVE - IF THEY EVER KNEW HOW TO IN THE FIRST PLACE. AND NOW, WITH INFLATION SUBSIDING AND THE ECONOMY POISED FOR RECOVERY THIS SUMMER, THEY'VE TAKEN TO SHEDDING CROCODILE TEARS OVER DEFICIT SPENDING.

THESE INCREDIBLE PEOPLE SAY THE PRESIDENT'S NEW BUDGET CONTAINS TOO LARGE A DEFICIT. THEY ALSO INSIST THAT WE CAN'T AFFORD ANY MORE CUTS IN GOVERNMENT SPENDING. WELL, WHICH IS IT? SURELY, IT CAN'T BE BOTH.

OF COURSE WE HAVE PROBLEMS. UNEMPLOYMENT IS HIGH AND PROBABLY HEADED HIGHER BEFORE THE RECESSION BOTTOMS OUT THIS SPRING. IN

INTEREST - SENSITIVE INDUSTRIES LIKE AUTOS AND HOUSING, FINDING AN OPTIMIST IS ABOUT LIKE FINDING A GOLFBALL IN A SNOWBANK. FARMERS ARE HURTING, THE CITIES BEMOAN THEIR CHRONIC POVERTY, AND SPECIAL INTERESTS FROM HERE TO TIMBUKTU ARE CLIMBING BACK ON THEIR FEET AND PREPARING TO WAGE A SCORCHED-EARTH CAMPAIGN AGAINST ANYTHING THAT THREATENS THEIR ENTRENCHED POWER. MEANWHILE, THE PRESS KEEPS UP A STEADY DRUMFIRE OF CRITICISM AIMED AT SPENDING CUTS THAT ARE ACTUALLY REDUCTIONS IN PLANNED RATES OF INCREASE.

OUR CURRENT PROBLEMS - AND THEIR CREATORS

ALL OF THESE PROBLEMS ARE FOR REAL, BUT WHO CREATED THEM? WHAT WE CONFRONT ARE THE AFTEREFFECTS OF A FORTY YEAR FISCAL JOB RIDE. INDEED, IF RONALD REAGAN HAD NOT COME ALONG TO TAKE THE WHEEL, WE MIGHT WELL HAVE GONE OFF THE ROAD AND OVER THE CLIFF. FOR HALF A CENTURY, GOVERNMENT BEHAVED AS IF IT COULD REPEAL BASIC LAWS OF SUPPLY AND DEMAND - WITH ALL THE ECONOMIC DAMAGE THAT INFLICTED ON OUR ABILITY TO CREATE JOBS AND COMPETE IN THE WORLD MARKETPLACE.

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NOW WE HAVE ABANDONED THOSE DOGMAS. IN THEIR PLACE, WE HAVE EMBRACED LONGRANGE SOLUTIONS FOR LONGRANGE PROBLEMS:

WE ARE CUTTING TAXES AND THE SHARE OF NATIONAL WEALTH SUCKED INTO THE FEDERAL VACUUM CLEANER. WE ARE PUTTING MORE DOLLARS IN THE POCKETS OF MORE INVESTORS LARGE AND SMALL. WE ARE HACKING AWAY AT THE JUNGLE OF REGULATORY CRABGRASS CHOKING BUSINESSES LARGE AND SMALL. WE ARE REBUILDING THE CAPITAL AND SAVINGS MARKETS. AND WE ARE STICKING TO A CONSISTENT POLICY OF SLOW BUT STEADY GROWTH IN THE MONETARY SUPPLY.

NOW, SOLUTIONS BRING PROBLEMS OF THEIR OWN, ESPECIALLY IN AN ELECTION YEAR. AND THE DEMOCRATS ARE PRETTY GOOD AT DEFLECTING BLAME FOR THEIR OWN FAILURES. THEY HAVE TO BE - HOW ELSE WOULD THEY HAVE SURVIVED THIS LONG? THEY MAY NOT HAVE ANY ECONOMIC PROGRAM OF THEIR OWN - BUT THEY SURE CAN GRAB A HEADLINE OR SCORE A DEBATING POINT WITH THE BEST OF THEM. YOU CAN EXPECT A LOT OF THAT IN 1982,

WHEN YOU AND I ENTER AN ELECTION YEAR UNDER SOME PRETTY STIFF OBSTACLES.

BUT NOTHING FUNDAMENTAL HAS CHANGED SINCE 1930. THE AMERICAN PEOPLE WANT RONALD REAGAN TO SUCCEED. THEY SEE POTENTIAL WHERE THE CRITICS SEE ONLY PROBLEM. THEY WANT TO EXPLOIT THE NEW BEGINNING, AND EXTEND THE NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

THE TRUE REPUBLICAN POSITION

LINCOLN UNDERSTOOD SUCH OPPORTUNITIES. "WE HOLD THE TRUE REPUBLICAN POSITION." HE TOLD CONGRESS IN 1848. "IN LEAVING THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS IN THEIR HANDS, WE CANNOT BE WRONG."

TODAY'S REPUBLICANS ARE WORKING TO RESTORE THE PEOPLE'S BUSINESS TO THE PEOPLE'S HANDS. WE'RE PUTTING MORE MONEY IN THEIR POCKETS, AND MORE RESPONSIBILITY IN THE COUNCILS OF LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENT. NOT BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IN TRICKLE DOWN - BUT BECAUSE WE BELIEVE IN BUILDING UP FROM THE GRASSROOTS OF AMERICA THE FRESH IDEAS THAT CAN OVERCOME HARDSHIP AND RESTORE US TO OUR PROPER LEADERSHIP.

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THE PRESIDENT HAS COME FORWARD WITH A SWEEPING NEW FEDERALISM, THAT PROMISES TO INJECT NEW LIFE INTO LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND NEW INCENTIVE FOR THE PEOPLE THEMSELVES TO TAKE CHARGE OF THEIR DESTINIES. THERE IS BOUND TO BE MONTHS, MAYBE YEARS, OF DEBATE AND DISPUTE OVER ALL THIS. YET EVEN ITS PRESENCE ON THE AGENDA OF NATIONAL CONCERNS IS PERSUASIVE EVIDENCE THAT THIS PRESIDENT HAS REVOLUTIONIZED POLITICS AS USUAL.

FOR THE FIRST TIME, THERE'S A CONSENSUS THAT THE OLD NOSTRUMS HAVE NOT ONLY FAILED, BUT CONTRIBUTED TO THE PAIN AND SUFFERING OF THOSE THEY WERE DESIGNED TO HELP. FOR THE FIRST TIME, GOVERNMENT IS BEING DEFINED AS THE SERVANT AND NOT THE MASTER OF THOSE WHO PAY ITS BILLS. FOR THE FIRST TIME, PEOPLE ARE TALKING ABOUT ENTERPRISE ZONES TO CREATE JOBS FOR THE JOBLESS AND RESTORE HOPE TO HOPELESS IN OUR CITIES. THEY'RE ACCEPTING MORE RESPONSIBILITY FOR SOLVING THE PROBLEMS OF THEIR NEIGHBORS.

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YET THE TOUGHEST DECISIONS STILL LIE BEFORE US. CAN WE REFORM THE WAY WE SPEND OUR RESOURCES? CAN WE VOTE NO WHEN PURELY POLITICAL INSTINCTS TELL US THAT THE POPULAR THING WOULD BE TO VOTE YES? CAN WE GET A HANDLE ON ENTITLEMENT PROGRAMS - WHICH HAVE MORE THAN DOUBLED AS A PERCENTAGE OF NATIONAL SPENDING OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS?

CAN WE TAKE ON THE INTEREST GROUPS, AND MAKE THE PAINFUL BUT NECESSARY CHOICES THAT WILL REDUCE BUDGET DEFICITS AND KEEP THE PRESIDENT'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY PROGRAM FROM BEING ABORTED AT TAKEOFF? CAN WE KEEP UP THE PRESSURE ON CONGRESS NOT TO SLIDE BACK INTO THE OLD AND COMFORTABLE WAYS OF PUMP-PRIMING AND MOON-PROMISING?

THE ANSWERS TO ALL THESE QUESTIONS ARE BY NO MEANS CERTAIN. UNTIL THEY ARE, THEN THE NEW BEGINNINGS OF THE LAST THIRTEEN MONTHS, LIKE THE REPUBLICAN MARCH TOWARD MAJORITY PARTY STATUS, WILL REMAIN

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A TANTALIZING POSSIBILITY. THE ANSWERS LIE IN MANY HANDS: IN MINE AND THOSE OF MY COLLEAGUES IN WASHINGTON, IN YOURS AND MILLIONS OF OTHERS STRETCHED OUT IN FRIENDSHIP TOWARD A PRESIDENT AND AN ADMINISTRATION THAT REPRESENTS POSITIVE CHANGE - AND THE PROSPECT OF BETTER DAYS AHEAD.

SO ON THIS LINCOLN DAY, WHEN THE FUTURE HANGS IN THE BALANCE AND HISTORY DEMANDS BOTH VISION AND SACRIFICE, LET US NOT TAKE REFUGE MERELY IN REMEMBERING THE FOUNDER OF OUR PARTY. LET US INSTEAD MAKE THE LESSONS OF HIS LIFE RELEVANT TO OUR OWN. LET US LIVE UP TO HIS EXAMPLE, AND SO CONDUCT OURSELVES THAT, A HUNDRED YEARS FROM NOW, FUTURE LINCOLN DAY SPEAKERS MIGHT SAY OF US THAT WE, TOO, FOUND THE COURAGE TO RISE TO THE OCCASION AND TO SAVE OUR COUNTRY WHEN SHE ENTRUSTED HER FORTUNES TO US. LINCOLN WOULD EXPECT IT. OUR CONSCIENCES DICTATE IT. AND THE AMERICAN PEOPLE DEMAND IT. TOGETHER, WE WILL SATISFY ALL THREE.