

ABRAHAM LINCOLN MEMORIAL HIGHWAY
FROM WASHINGTON TO GETTYSBURG

SPEECH

OF

HON. WILLIAM P. BORLAND

OF MISSOURI

IN THE

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

FRIDAY, JULY 28, 1911



WASHINGTON
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Gettysburg.

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The House being in Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and having under consideration the bill (H. R. 12812) to reduce the duties on manufactures of cotton—

Mr. BORLAND said:

Mr. CHAIRMAN: After the weighty discussion of the tariff to which we have just listened I am not going to attempt to throw any light upon that great economic question. The few minutes assigned to me I intend to devote, under the latitude of general debate, to some views in regard to the proposed memorial to Abraham Lincoln. In the closing days of the last session provision was made for an expenditure of \$2,000,000 for such a memorial. The law is limited in its scope to a memorial or monument in the city of Washington. I understand that a number of propositions have been presented to the commission embracing various locations and designs for the proposed memorial. To my mind the most sane and appropriate suggestion is one that unfortunately does not come within the scope of the law—that is, a memorial national highway from the city of Washington to the battle field of Gettysburg. I have therefore to-day introduced a bill to amend the law by providing that the commission might consider and report upon such a plan, together with such negotiations as may be necessary to secure consent of the States of Maryland and Pennsylvania and their respective subdivisions if required, and the design for beautifying the highway with proper memorial arches, ornamental bridges, and so forth.

Mr. NORRIS. Will the gentleman yield for a question?

Mr. BORLAND. If I have the time I will be glad to do so.

Mr. NORRIS. Does the gentleman understand that the selection of this memorial is going to be settled soon—prior to the convening of Congress, let me say, in its regular session?

Mr. BORLAND. Yes.

Mr. NORRIS. Does the gentleman expect to have his bill, or would he like to have his bill, enacted into law at this session?

Mr. BORLAND. I will answer that question in this way. It has been announced through the press that the Fine Arts Commission has recommended to the memorial committee, of which President Taft is chairman, a location on the Potomac Drive. It is further announced in the press that the President proposes to convene the committee next week to consider this report. The report must, when agreed upon by the committee, be submitted to Congress for its final ratification. It is not important, in my mind, whether this bill of mine is considered at this session or not. The purpose of introducing it and speak-

ing to it at this time is to get the matter in some form before the people and before the committee, in order that they may know that some plan of that kind might be added to their duties.

Now, Mr. Chairman, resuming the few remarks that I want to make to the House at this time, the piles of stone that have been suggested by these various proposals will add to the city of Washington some more monuments—monuments to dead men; monuments that are absolutely useless; in some cases beautiful and ornamental, and in some cases, according to the Fine Arts Commission, neither beautiful nor ornamental, but in no case useful.

I want to remind the Members of this House how many monuments have been completed and unveiled since I have been here in Washington, less than three years: Monuments to Kosciuszko, Pulaski, Von Steuben, Stevenson, Sheridan, Witherspoon, Longfellow, and Shepherd—eight in three years. Now we are to have Christopher Columbus, Alexander Hamilton, and Thomas Jefferson, and no one knows how many more.

Mr. FITZGERALD. One to Abraham Lincoln.

Mr. BORLAND. Yes. The city of Washington will be covered from one end to the other with these monuments. One unfortunate thing about it is that no matter how much money is expended upon them or what artists are employed upon them, in another generation a new school of artists will come along and say they are not true art and should be torn down. If \$2,000,000 of the people's money is to be expended for a memorial to Abraham Lincoln, it strikes me that it is wholly inconsistent with his character that it should savor of the pomp of kings. It is entirely out of keeping with our idea of the man. A \$2,000,000 pile of stones can neither increase his fame nor exemplify his character. Would it not be a much more appropriate memorial to build a highway from the city of Washington to the battle field of Gettysburg, that field which is immortalized by his burning words as well as by the dauntless heroism of the citizen soldiers of America? Would it not be more in consonance with the character of Abraham Lincoln that a memorial should be built for the use of the people now living than to erect one that would be costly and at the same time useless? Shall we make one that is as dead as his own mortal clay, or as vital as his immortal spirit?

Why, over in Italy, in the city of Rome, they are building a memorial to Victor Emanuel, probably costing \$5,000,000. They are tearing down some of the priceless monuments of classic times in order to build this structure, which is intended to be a representation of modern art and architecture. It does not make one think less of the deathless fame of Victor Emanuel, but it does make one think less of the Italian Parliament and its membership when it authorizes an expenditure of the people's money for a purpose of that kind, when the whole country needs a commercial and an industrial regeneration.

What we need is a monument that will be of some use to the people now living on earth. If we could have the views on the subject of the great commoner, Abraham Lincoln, himself, I am satisfied he would be in favor of such a tribute. It is said there is no monument so enduring as a highway. Human his-

tory can point to no memorial—not even the Pyramids of Egypt, with all the slave labor that went into them—that is so absolutely indestructible as the simplest highway along which the feet of commerce and of love and affection have trod. Not only can this highway be used for the purposes of commerce and of pleasure, it can be crowned with greater purposes of art and of beauty by the terminal arches and the ornamental bridges in its course. It can be made a thing of beauty that will attract visitors to this country, as some of the works of art of the old countries attract to them tourists who spend their money, their time, and their thought in studying the institutions and beauties of the country.

I hope appropriate means may be found in the near future for the establishment of this national highway. [Applause.]

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