

Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission
Meeting #1, July 12, 2001, Noon at the
Library of Congress Member's Room

Present were Jean Bandler, Darrel Bigham, Gabor Boritt, Senator Richard Durbin, Joan Flinspach, Harold Holzer, Congressman Ray LaHood, Congressman David Phelps, Lura Lynn Ryan, Louise Taper, Tommy Turner, Frank Williams. Congressional staff included Diane Liesman and Joan Mitchell with Congressman LaHood; Mark Palmer and Pat Souders from Senator Durbin's office; and Winifred Pizzano with Mrs. Ryan.

Prior to introductions, Congressman LaHood informed the commissioners of some housekeeping issues. He explained that it would be approximately 60 days before reimbursement for commissioners' expenses would be available via the Library of Congress. He introduced Dr. James Billington, Librarian of Congress, and asked Dr. Billington to speak about the Library of Congress. Dr. Billington did so and also answered questions. Dr. Billington then introduced General Scott, the Deputy Director of the Library of Congress. General Scott will be our contact at the Library of Congress. Congressman LaHood made a brief mention of the need for an executive director and suggested that we will need a search committee and an office space committee.

Congressman LaHood began introductions, and all commissioners present introduced themselves. Joan Flinspach distributed minutes from the conference call held on June 26, 2001.

Congressman LaHood called for the election of officers. Lura Lynn Ryan nominated Congressman LaHood and Senator Durbin as co-chairs. Jean Bandler seconded this nomination. Congressman LaHood called for discussion. Joan Flinspach asked if other nominations could be made. Congressman LaHood said that they could be. Joan Flinspach nominated Harold Holzer and suggested that the three gentlemen serve as co-chairs. Louise Taper seconded this nomination. Discussion followed. The commissioners agreed that all three nominees would serve as co-chairs.

Senator Durbin explained why an advisory committee would be helpful to the commission. He suggested that each commissioner submit six names to the co-chairs for consideration for membership on the advisory board. Senator Durbin also encouraged the commissioners to consider the advisory committee as more than honorific. Harold Holzer pointed out that the advisory committee could meet annually. **Commissioners are to send their 6 suggestions via email to the three chairs by August 1. They are to include names, addresses and biographical paragraphs for each person nominated.**

Gabor Boritt raised the history of the use of an executive committee by previous presidential commissions and pointed out that we are a smaller commission of only 15 and that we did not need an executive committee. Several commissioners commented on the availability of conference calling and e-mail. Frank Williams mentioned voting by proxy. He suggested the need for bylaws and a mission statement. By consensus, the commission agreed to not have an executive committee and to use teleconferencing, etc. as a means of conducting business.

In discussing the appointment of an executive director, the commission agreed by consensus that efforts will be made to complete this hire by October 1. The search committee consists of Louise Taper, Frank Williams, Joan Flinspach and the co-chairs. This committee is to determine the job status for this position, a salary schedule, and the process for hire. Joan Flinspach distributed a draft job description.

Senator Durbin informed the commissioners that this year's budget of \$461,000 expires on October 1. He asked what expenses we might have prior to that time. Harold Holzer raised the issue of hiring a public relations firm to create an identity for the commission. Discussion of the need for a website and a logo ensued. Senator Durbin mentioned an event. Joan Flinspach suggested an event that would in some way involve the public. Senator Durbin then suggested a swearing-in ceremony followed by a reception. The commissioners agreed to pursue such an event to be held on or near September 20. This date is close to a significant Lincoln date—September 22, the date that Lincoln announced the Emancipation Proclamation. Gabor Boritt invited the commissioners to meet on November 19 at Gettysburg. This is the anniversary of Lincoln's Gettysburg Address. The commissioners welcomed and accepted his invitation. During this discussion, the commissioners also agreed to meet quarterly.

Also during this discussion, the topic of possible projects came up. Darrel Bigham suggested that we give strong consideration to the five National Park Service Lincoln sites. The commissioners agreed. He also discussed an idea that came from a teacher's symposium that he held in Southern Indiana. He mentioned that during this symposium, Dr. James Madison of Indiana University recommended that we study not only what was celebrated in the past, but also what was not. Darrel Bigham referenced the founding of the NAACP in Springfield in 1909—the year of the Lincoln Centennial. Joan Flinspach distributed a list of possible projects to be used as a starting point for discussion in future meetings. Louise Taper asked the commissioners about contacting Hal David to compose, perhaps in conjunction with Burt Bacharach, an official song to be used throughout the celebration. The commissioners agreed and Senator Durbin asked Louise to make this contact.

Near the end of the meeting, discussion again centered on duties and how the commission would accomplish them. Joan Flinspach distributed a list of suggested subcommittees. This list can be used as a starting point for later discussion. At this point, Frank Williams noted the sunset clause that closes the life of the commission four years after its formation. He remarked that it would be far more efficient for the commissioners to be implementers, not just planners. The commissioners agreed that they will be most familiar with the plans made, and thus are the logical people to see to it that the plans are completed. Senator Durbin asked Diane Liesman about the history of the sunset clause. She said she would check and report on this later.

Senator Durbin asked for a recap of the action items. Commissioners listed submitting names, etc. for the advisory committee, hiring an executive director, working on a swearing-in ceremony with a reception, and meeting quarterly. This discussion concluded the meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Joan L. Flinspach