Outline of Plan for a series of 36 Radio sketches on Life of Abraham Lincoln. These sketches to be divided into six Acts of six Scenes each.

ACT I

THE BOY LINCOLN

Scene I - "WHAT IS LIBERTY?"

Lincoln was living at six years of age on the highway which led Northward from Nashville to Louisville. Here a continual procession of settlers of every type passed; among these were many soldiers of the Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. Lincoln had an uncle living in Kentucky who had fought through the Revolutionary War. The stories of the passing soldiers, of the elder Lincolns themselves were heard by the boy. One could develop a scene on these facts I think:-

Little Abraham is sitting by the road; his mother calls him to supper. He asks that she wait, there is an old soldier coming. "Bring him into supper," says Nancy Hanks. They talk. After supper they sit by the fire and he tells of battles, talks much of Washington who it must be realized is the personage in the mind of youth at that time, an inspiring personage, doing for the youth of America, particularly pioneer America, what Lenin did for

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the communistic youth of Russia. He is the figure around which the notion of liberty and unionism grew. The little boy listening asks, "Why did they fight?" They tell him, "for liberty." "What is liberty?" And then there is a simple and heartfelt definition given him. And he goes to bed wondering if he understands.

Scene II - YOUNG LINCOLN MEETS GEORGE WASHINGTON

One of the first books that influenced Lincoln according to his own statement was Weems' Life of Washington. This book he borrowed and read. What Washington meant to youth one hundred years ago could be developed in a talk between the boy and a teacher or preacher or neighbor. I think it would be historically sound and practical to use a neighbor of Southwestern Indiana - Josiah Crawford - with whom we know Lincoln often had serious talks. This development of Washington as the pioneer saw him and as the boy gets him is important. There is no question that in the boy Lincoln's mind Washington stood for union. This notion of unionism was one of the greatest concepts in his mind. He got this idea as a boy from the talks of soldiers and from the reading of Weems' Life of Washington.

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Scene III - LINCOLN DISCOVERS THE CONSTITUTION

When still a boy a book fell into his hands which contained the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence. It was the first time that he had ever read these documents; they had been words to him largely before although he must have heard quotations from the Declaration. I should say that in the previous scenes sentences might be quoted by the old soldier and by Josiah Crawford, if it is decided to use these characters in the development of the scenes. Now he settled down in that determined effort to ~~read~~ understand these documents. He gets from them a larger conception of all this talk that he had heard about liberty, of what Washington meant. He goes through a hard struggle to try to understand these things. And then he gets the idea of opportunity, that the American scheme does not mean that something tangible and material is to be handed him, it means the opportunity to work, find work. If it is to come true it is something to be worked for.

Scene IV - THE HUNT FOR THE BOOK

The boy has come to understand that it is up to him to back up the struggle for liberty, to help develop Washington's grand scheme. Again I repeat that it is historically sound to make Washington a living character in the boy's life. There is no question of the hold he had on the youthful pioneer imagination, particularly on Lincoln's

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imagination. Lincoln always claimed it was better to take Washington as an ideal figure than it was to try what we call to debunk him.

We have then in the boy's mind the conception of a union which is to be developed through a Constitution - everybody have a chance - but that you have an individual responsibility to do your part. Now how is he going to do his part? He must learn; to learn he must have books. His hunt for knowledge can be developed by conversation with his mother, his step-mother really, who became his confident and backer in his ambition against his father who naturally enough thought he should be out splitting rails. This wise, understanding woman talks with Lincoln as he lies in front of the fireplace scribbling on the back of the wooden shovel which he had scraped off in order to give him what corresponded to a slate. Very interesting to introduce ~~him~~ in this talk the difficulty in finding a scrap of paper, finding anything to write on or with. Of course much talk of the difficulty of getting books and a word or two of the "blab school" where there was only one book from which the teacher read and the pupils repeated after him in concert. And then where Lincoln hoped to get books. And some account of his walking for them. He once said he had read all the books within fifty miles. And all of that can come out in this conversation with the mother. It must end of course with the boy's determination to know

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and understand what this Constitution meant and what George Washington was working for. How were they going to get this liberty they fought for and what was to be his part in it?

Scene V - WHAT DOES THE BIBLE MEAN?

The book that Lincoln heard most about and the only book that was owned by his father, Thomas Lincoln, was the Bible. It was true he had difficulty in getting something out of it to lay his hands on, to put his mind to. No doubt he knew the Bible text - we have all sorts of proofs of that and some of them should be brought out afterwards, the way he used it to confuse his opponents - very cunningly and very wittingly. I have an idea that an understanding person could develop what certainly went on in the boy's mind, that after all what the Bible meant was not foot-washing which his church practiced or hard and fast rules of conduct and of creed. It meant you must love your fellowman. That is, he got the conception early of the brotherhood of man and of the relation of that brotherhood of man to the unionism. Washington preached. After all that was what it was all about - you were trying to make a union of men so they could live freely together as brothers. This is the conception that animated him I am confident. It is one of the great concepts of the Democratic ideal, gives a fire, a religious feeling to it

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and it was strong in the pioneer. The two must get together - democracy and brotherhood. The boy gets this. It must be done very naturally and simply, can't be preaching; it must be talk.

Scene VI - LINCOLN LEARNS ABOUT MEN

That is, he learned about men in society and nobody ever had a better chance to learn all about shiftlessness and meanness and narrowness and cruelty of men then he did. He met the bully, the vulgar man, the obscene. He knew what went on down the river. He was a boy of immense curiosity; there was no man who passed that he did not talk to. Somehow show a boy making his way through the pioneer society in which he lived in Southern Indiana. And perhaps show what kind of a boy he was when he came out at twenty one and the family moved on into Indiana.

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