

# ONE NATION UNDER GOD

## WITH LIBERTY & JUSTICE FOR ALL?

BY TIM GIAGO

In these days of extremism it is often difficult to distinguish between patriotism and disloyalty or between religious believers and non-believers.

When one is critical of patriotism or religion, even though we have the right to be critical under the United States Constitution, our criticisms often turn us into demagogues or worse in the eyes of those whose beliefs we criticize.

Watching the esteemed members of Congress standing on the Capitol steps with their hands over their little hearts reciting the Pledge of Allegiance in an apparent act of defiance, was one of the more humorous scenes I have witnessed thus far into the 21st century.

Ninth Circuit Judge Alfred Goodwin ruled in favor of plaintiff Michael Newdow who objected to the use of the words "under God" that had been inserted into the "Pledge" in 1954. The Court ruled that it defied the Constitutional provision of separation of church and state. Amen!

In South Dakota the motto is; "Under God the People Rule." This is poppycock pure and simple. Our local daily, the *Rapid City Journal*, editorialized; "Which half of the motto would the federal judges for life object to more strenuously, we wonder?" Let me count the ways.

The dual systems of justice in South Dakota have been under scrutiny by the federal government for more than 30 years and yet they exist. When statistics are compiled for unemployment, education, the juvenile courts, and disparity in sentencing, the "Under God the People Rule" means absolutely nothing. The People of the Great Sioux Nation are seldom if ever included in these statistics because if they were, it would skew the state averages. The "people who rule" this state are mostly White, Anglo Saxon Protestant.

The "people who rule" are more than likely WASP Republicans.

When objecting to the ruling by the 9th Circuit Court, President George W. Bush said, "Ridiculous." Senate Majority Leader Tom Daschle said "Nuts," and the editor of the *Rapid City Journal* added, "Amen."

"One Nation, under God, with liberty and justice for all" is the other part of that equation. Let me take you back to 1954 when "under God" was added to the Pledge. Black Americans did not have equal voting rights, equal educational rights, housing rights or the right to stay in most hotels or to eat in most Southern restaurants. American Indians were in the midst of an era known as "Termination" and "Relocation."

The federal government began the process of "closing down" Indian reservations by confiscating the land, distributing some of it to tribal members and then opening the "surplus" to the new white settlers. They accomplished much of this by removing Indian people from their reservations and "relocating" them to cities such as Chicago, Dallas, Cleveland and Los Angeles.

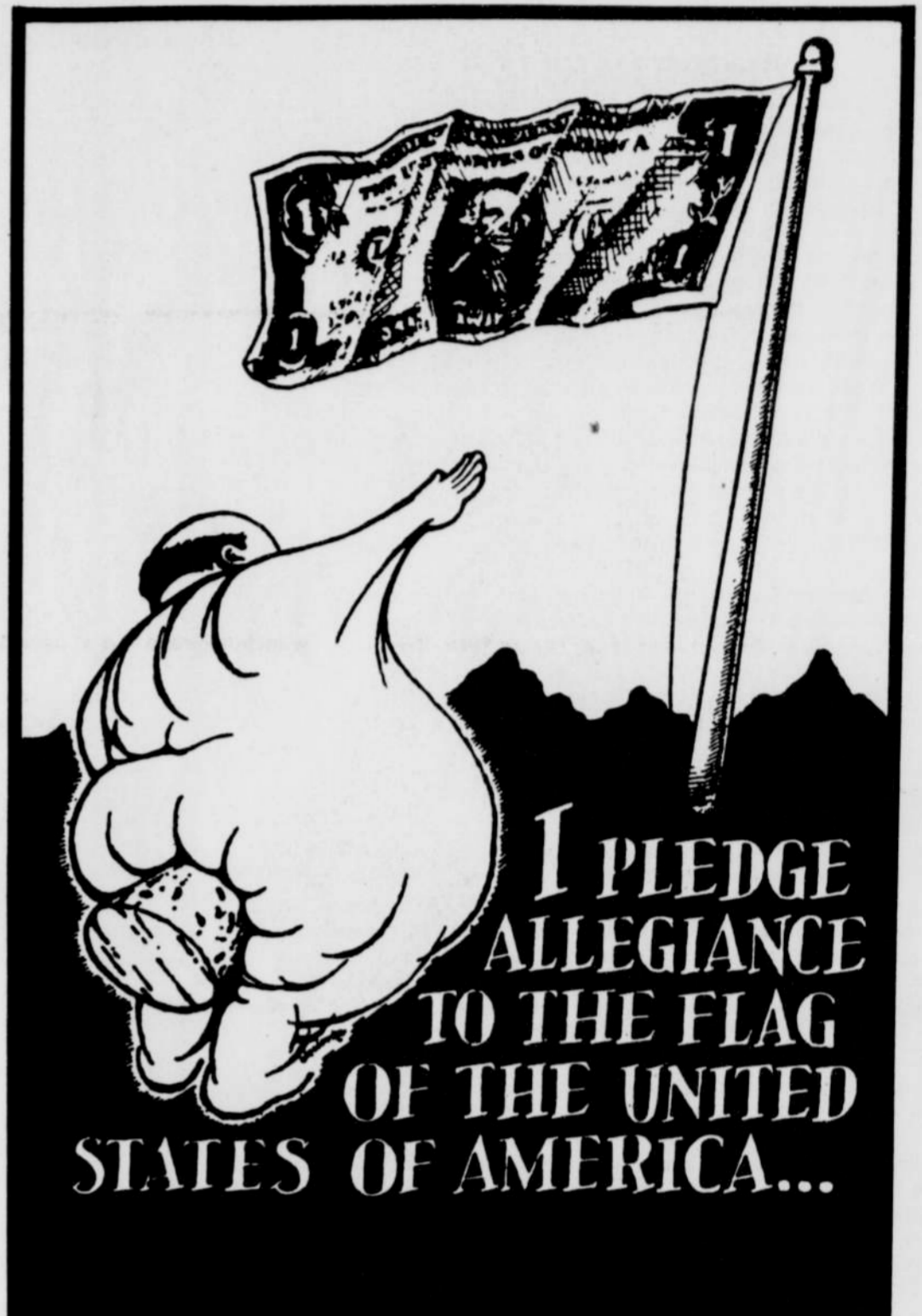
It serves the conscience of many Americans well to believe the ruling by the 9th Circuit Judge undermines their religious beliefs. They believe it interferes with their right of "Freedom of Religion."

Did that stop the settlers seeking religious freedom from imposing their beliefs upon Native Americans and attempting to stomp out the indigenous religions by hook or crook often with the collusion of the federal and state governments? Not on your life!

There was a saying among Black Americans that the most segregated day of the week was Sunday. Blacks went to their churches and whites went to theirs. Were they worshipping the same God but in separate, but equal churches?

How many white Americans were dragged from their homes as tiny children, often over the mournful protests of their parents, and placed into religious institutions known as Indian missions? How many of those who object to having "under God" removed from the Pledge of Allegiance stood up and said that it is wrong to take a race of people and force them to discard their own religious beliefs and to take up the teachings of the Christian churches?

The editorial in the local daily had the audacity to say that the "9th Circuit Court itself is an adventure in religious tolerance." They suggested, "correct us if we're wrong." Well, this is an attempt at correction that will never make it to their editorial pages.



FRANK CIECIORKA

I take exception to a pledge that expounds upon the virtues of "One Nation under God with liberty and justice for all" that refuses to admit that we are *not* one Nation under God and that there is not uniform Liberty and Justice for all.

Many years ago, long before this controversy arose, J.P.W. James of the Lummi Indian Nation wrote, "I pledge allegiance to my tribe, to the democratic principles of the republic; and to the individual freedoms borrowed from the Iroquois and Choctaw Confederacies as incorporated into the United States Constitution, so that my forefathers shall not have died in vain."

An old friend of mine from Georgia used to say when he thought someone was making Much Ado About Nothing, "What's the hubba, bubba?" And that is the way I feel about the ruckus over removing the words "under God" from the Pledge of Allegiance. And I do not consider myself to be unpatriotic or without religion.

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## WHAT? ANOTHER SHADOW GOVERNMENT

The nation doesn't need to keep Vice President Dick Cheney and a bunch of bureaucrat gnomes holed up in expensive caves to run things if a terrorist attack destroys Washington. When G.W.Jr. moved into the White House, a shadow government moved in with him.

The National Rifle Association became the shadow Justice Department, Enron took over the Energy Department, Exxon and Shell pull the strings of the Department of Interior, International Paper became the director of the Forest Service, Lockheed/Northrup took control of Defense Department procurement, and Microsoft became head of Anti-Trust.

If a terrorist sneaks a bomb into Washington it won't make much difference. Our government is pretty much controlled by corporate executives scattered around the country. This was made clear with the recent resignation of one of the Environmental Protection Agency's top pollution enforcement officials. A Republican first appointed by the senior Bush, Eric Schaeffer quit in disgust, saying that the second Bush's administration is "undermining" the Clean Air Act. Turning his first (and I predict his only) term in office into a love feast for corporate contributors, Bush has:

~Cut the Environmental Protection Agency by \$550 million.

~Taken corporate polluters off the hook for cleaning up the toxic messes they leave behind, making John Q. Taxpayer foot the bill.

~Suspended rules denying government contracts to companies that violate government regulations, including environmental and workplace safety rules.

~Suspended rules that require hard-rock mines to clean up their pollution on public lands.

~Rescinded a proposal to give the public information about public health and safety consequences of chemical plant accidents.

Specifically for his oil/gas industry and Enron buddies, Bush has:

~Cut funding for research into cleaner, more efficient cars and trucks by 28%.

~Canceled the 2004 deadline for automakers to develop high-mileage prototypes.

~Abandoned his campaign promise to regulate carbon dioxide levels.

~Rescinded rules mandating energy efficiency regulations for air conditioners and heat pumps.

~Cut funding of renewable energy source research by 50%.

~Put pressure on state officials to open up national monuments for oil and gas drilling, coal mining and clearcut timber harvests.

To pay off anti-government, free market conservatives, Bush has:

~Proposed elimination of marine protections for the Cannel Islands of California and the coral reefs of Hawaii.

~Eliminated funding for the Wetlands Reserve Program, which encourages farmers to maintain wetlands habitat.

~Abandoned his campaign pledge to invest \$100 million in rainforest conservation.

To demonstrate interest in non-CEO Americans, G.W. Jr. has:

~Reduced the Community Access Program (for people without health insurance) by 86%.

~Cut \$60 million from a Boys & Girls Club of America program for public housing.

~Cut childcare for low-income families moving from welfare to work.

~Cut \$700 million from the repair and maintenance budget for public housing.

~Cut \$15.7 million earmarked for child abuse and neglect investigations.

But the budget he sent to Congress spends more on defense than all other countries of the world combined.

Big shots of American industry love G.W. Bush. They bought and paid for him. But can the rest of the United States afford him?

~JOHN DAVID ROSE