

Pledging Allegiance to the Omnipotent Lincolnian State

By Thomas DiLorenzo

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The US Supreme Court's recent decision to review the constitutionality of the "under God" wording in the Pledge of Allegiance provides an occasion to educate Americans about the ideological purpose of the Pledge. A good place to start would be John Baer's book, *The Pledge of Allegiance: A Centennial History, 1892-1992* (Free State Press, 1992). In it one would learn that the author of the Pledge was one Francis Bellamy, a defrocked Baptist minister from Boston who identified himself as a Christian Socialist and who preached in his pulpit that "Jesus was a socialist."

Bellamy was the cousin of Edward Bellamy, author of the extremely popular 1888 socialist fantasy, *Looking Backward*. In this novel the main character, Julian West, falls asleep in 1887 and awakens in the year 2000 when the socialist "utopia" has been achieved: All industry is state owned, Soviet style; everyone is an employee of the state who is conscripted at age 21 and retires at age 45; and all workers earn the same income.

Francis Bellamy said that one purpose of the Pledge of Allegiance was to help accomplish his lifelong goal of making his cousin's socialist fantasy a reality in America. He further stated that the "true reason for allegiance to the Flag" was to indoctrinate American school children in the false history of the American founding that was espoused first by Daniel Webster and, later, by Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln falsely claimed that the states were never sovereign and that the union created the states, not the other way around. (But as Joe Sobran has remarked, the notion that the union is older than the states makes as much sense as the idea that a marriage can be older than either spouse. It is impossible for a union of two things to be older than either of the things it is a union of).

The truth is that in all of the American founding documents, including the Declaration of Independence, the Articles of Confederation, and the Constitution, the states refer to themselves as "free and independent." The Treaty of Paris that ended the Revolutionary War was a treaty with the individual, free and independent states, not "the whole people" of the United States.

The citizens of the states understood that they were sovereign over the federal government, not the other way around, as Lincoln absurdly claimed. The sovereign states delegated a few enumerated powers to the central government, as their agent, while maintaining sovereignty for themselves.

Despite Lincoln's effort to destroy the system of federalism and states' rights that was championed by Jefferson and other founders by waging total war on the South, many Americans still believed in the Jeffersonian states' rights ideal as of the 1880s. Despite all the death and destruction of the war, and several subsequent decades of Lincolnian propaganda about the alleged evils of states' rights, many Americans still viewed federalism and states' rights as a safeguard against federal tyranny — just as the American founding fathers, especially Jefferson, had done.

Francis Bellamy was alarmed by this, for he understood perfectly well that the first step along the way to his socialist utopia was a consolidated or unitary state, just like the one Bismarck had created in Germany through "blood and iron," and the one Abraham Lincoln championed in the U.S. Monopoly government, in other words, was a necessary first step on the road to socialism. All semblances of the Jeffersonian philosophy of federalism and states' rights must be destroyed. In Bellamy's own words:

The true reason for allegiance to the Flag is the "republic for which it stands." ... And what does that vast thing, the Republic mean? It is the concise political word for the Nation — the One Nation which the Civil War was fought to prove. To make that One Nation idea clear, we must specify that it is indivisible, as Webster and Lincoln used to repeat in their great speeches. (See John W. Baer, "[The Pledge of Allegiance: A Short History](#)").

Bellamy considered the "liberty and justice for all" phrase in the Pledge to be an Americanized version of the slogan of the French Revolution: "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity." The French revolutionaries believed that mass killing by the state was always justified if it was done for the "grand purpose" of achieving "equality." In an 1876 commencement speech Francis Bellamy praised the French Revolution as "the poetry of human brotherhood." And "what we call the Civil War," Donald Livingston has remarked, "was in fact America's French Revolution, and Lincoln was the first Jacobin president" (Donald Livingston, "The Litmus Test for American Conservatism," *Chronicles*, Jan. 2001).

Bellamy intended the Pledge of Allegiance to be a vow of allegiance to the state, a quintessentially un-American idea. He stated that he got the idea from the "loyalty oaths" that were imposed on Southerners during Lincoln's invasion of the Southern states and afterward, during Reconstruction. During the war, adult male civilians in the South were compelled to take a loyalty oath to the federal government or be shot. During Reconstruction almost all Southern white adult males were disenfranchised by the requirement that in order to vote or hold political office, they must take the following oath: "I _____ do solemnly swear (or affirm) that I have never voluntarily borne arms against the United States since I have been a citizen thereof; that I have voluntarily given no aid, countenance, counsel, or encouragement to persons engaged in armed hostility thereto . . ." (Baer, *The Pledge of Allegiance*, Chapter 4). Few if any Southern men would dare to take this public pledge in the post-war years.

Francis Bellamy first published the Pledge of Allegiance in the September 1892 issue of *The Youth's Companion*, which has been described as "the Reader's Digest of its day." By that time, Bellamy had been forced to leave his Boston pulpit because of his practice of preaching socialism rather than the Gospel.

In addition to his work at the magazine, Francis Bellamy was the vice president in charge of education for the "Society of Christian Socialists," a national organization that advocated income taxation, central banking, nationalized education, nationalization of industry, and other features of socialism. In his classic book, *Socialism* (p. 223), Ludwig von Mises characterized Christian socialism as "merely a variety of State Socialism." Its advocates, like the Bellamy cousins, held that

Agriculture and handicraft, with perhaps small shopkeeping, are the only admissible occupations. Trade and speculation are superfluous, injurious, and evil. Factories and large-scale industries are a wicked invention of the "Jewish spirit"; they produce only bad goods which are foisted on buyers by the large stores and by other monstrosities of modern trade to the detriment of purchasers.

The Bellamy cousins decided that American youth needed to be taught "loyalty to the state" because they realized that the individualism and the love of liberty of the American founding fathers would always stand in the way of achieving the socialist utopia that was described in *Looking Backward*. America supposedly suffered from too much liberty and not enough equality, said the author of the Pledge of Allegiance.

The "one nation, indivisible" wording was especially important to the Bellamy cousins, for if secession were legitimized, their pipe dream of socialism through a consolidated, monopoly government would be destroyed. This was the thinking of all the worst tyrants of the twentieth century, including Hitler and Stalin. (Hitler even quoted approvingly Lincoln's "union created the states" theory from his first inaugural address in *Mein Kampf* in order to make his own case for destroying federalism and states' rights in Germany.)

The public schools must be used to teach blind obedience to the state, the Bellamys reasoned, and the National Education Association was pleased to help them accomplish this goal. They planned a "National Public School Celebration" in 1892, which was the first national propaganda campaign on behalf of the Pledge of Allegiance. It was a massive campaign that involved government schools and politicians throughout the country. The government schools were promoted, along with the Pledge, while private schools, especially parochial ones, were criticized.

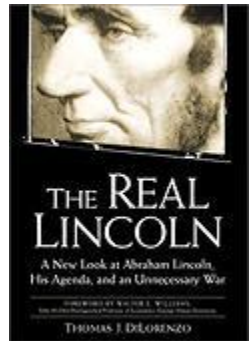
Students were taught to recite the Pledge with their arms outstretched, palms up, similar to how Roman citizens were required to hail Caesar, and not too different from the way in which Nazi soldiers saluted their Fhrer. This was the custom in American public schools

from the turn of the twentieth century until around 1950, when it was apparently decided by public school officials that the Nazi-like salute was in bad taste.



The Pledge of Allegiance is an oath of allegiance to the omnipotent, Lincolnian state. Its purpose was never to inculcate in children the ideals of the American founding fathers, but those of two eccentric nineteenth-century socialists. (Not surprisingly, among its staunchest contemporary defenders and promoters are the Straussian neocon Lincoln idolaters at the Claremont Institute.)

If the Supreme Court decides that the "under God" wording in the Pledge is unconstitutional, it will be doing the right thing for the wrong reason (it does not "establish a religion"). The Pledge itself is an oath of allegiance to the central state, and the "under God" language only serves to deify the state. From the perspective of a Thomas Jefferson, George Washington, or James Madison, nothing could be more un-American. After all, they and their contemporaries had fought a long and bloody war of secession to sever their forced allegiance, complete with loyalty oaths, to another overbearing and tyrannical state, namely the British empire.



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