

## Commentary on the Pledge of Allegiance

By Red Skelton (1969)



When I was a small boy in Vincennes, Indiana, I heard, I think, one of the most outstanding speeches I ever heard in my life. I think it compares with the Sermon on the Mount, Lincoln's Gettysburg Address, and Socrates' Speech to the Students.

We had just finished reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, and he [Mr. Lasswell, the Principal of Vincennes High School] called us all together, and he says, "Uh, boys and girls, I have been listening to you recite the Pledge of Allegiance all semester, and it seems that it has become monotonous to you. Or, could it be, you do not understand the meaning of each word?"

If I may, I would like to recite the pledge, and give you a definition for each word:

**I** -- Me; an individual; a committee of one.

**Pledge** -- Dedicate all of my worldly good to give without self-pity.

**Allegiance** -- My love and my devotion.

**To the Flag** -- Our standard. "Old Glory"; a symbol of courage. And wherever she waves, there is respect, because your loyalty has given her a dignity that shouts "Freedom is everybody's job."

**of the United** -- That means we have all come together.

**States** -- Individual communities that have united into 48 great states; 48 individual communities with pride and dignity and purpose; all divided by imaginary boundaries, yet united to a common cause, and that's love of country --

Of **America**.

**And to the Republic** -- A Republic: a sovereign state in which power is invested into the representatives chosen by the people to govern; and the government is the people; and it's from the people to the leaders, not from the leaders to the people.

For which it **stands**

**One Nation** -- Meaning "so blessed by God."

**[Under God]**<sup>1</sup>

**Indivisible** -- Incapable of being divided.

**With Liberty** -- Which is freedom; the right of power for one to live his own life without fears, threats, or any sort of retaliation.

**And Justice** -- The principle and qualities of dealing fairly with others.

**For All** -- For All. That means, boys and girls, it's as much your country as it is mine.

Now let me hear you recite the **Pledge of Allegiance**:

***I pledge allegiance***

***to the Flag of the United States of America,***

***and to the Republic, for which it stands;***

***one nation, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.***

Since I was a small boy, two states have been added to our country, and two words have been added to the Pledge of Allegiance: "Under God." Wouldn't it be a pity if someone said, "That is a prayer" -- and that be eliminated from our schools, too?