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# American Flag in the Court Room

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## AN AMERICAN FLAG IN THE COURT ROOM\*

The representatives of the Hammond Post of the American Legion present themselves before this Court today for the purpose of presenting to your Honor and to the Court an American Flag and of asking that during the sessions of this Court this flag may be displayed in a position of prominence in the courtroom. We present ourselves here for this purpose with confidence because we know the Court will appreciate the opportunity to display our country's emblem in this courtroom, both for its intrinsic beauty and for the idealism and sentiment which its presence here will generate.

Many important and beautiful things could be said in connection with a presentation of our country's flag to one of the highest of our country's courts. The flag has inspired many of the finest things in song and in story in poetry and in oratory, that the pages of American literature have recorded. But it is not alone nor even chiefly the splendid things that have been said and written about the American flag that give that flag its real significance. Far more important than any words that have been written or spoken about the flag are the deeds that a great people have achieved under the inspiration of the ideals of which that flag is the emblem. And saving only the heroic deeds of the battlefield there is no chapter in American history that so splendidly exemplifies the fact that the American flag stands for the finest things in government, not merely

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\*An address delivered by Timothy P. Galvin, a graduate of Notre Dame, Class of 1916, on March 2, 1931. Mr. Galvin is a practicing attorney and a member of the firm of Tinkham & Galvin, located at Hammond, Indiana. At the opening of the March Term of the United States District Court at Hammond, the Hammond Post of the American Legion presented an American Flag to the Honorable Thomas W. Slick, Judge of the Court. Mr. Galvin was selected as a representative of the American Legion, of which he is a member, to make the speech of presentation. After the presentation of the flag, the court ordered that the speech of presentation be spread of record on the order book of the court.

in word but also in action, as does that chapter which has been written by our Federal courts, a chapter that tells the story of justice "administered freely and without purchase; completely, and without denial; speedily, and without delay." Something of the same significance that attaches to the presence of the American flag over American fortifications in time of war should, and, I think, does attach to the display of that flag in a courtroom in time of peace. And just as the valor of American soldiers has made the flag an emblem of glory on a thousand battlefields, so also has the record of an outstanding judiciary made the flag the emblem of justice in a thousand courtrooms.

We feel sure that this Court will not consider the American Legion presumptuous in pre-empting the privilege of presenting this flag to this Court. Rather do we feel that the court will welcome it from our hands. It would be presumptuous for us to say that the soldiers of the World War have added any new luster to this flag. Indeed, we seek no such praise nor do we claim any such distinction. We do believe, however, that the majority of the American people feel and that history will record that the American soldiers of the World War did not permit our flag to lose any of the luster that it had already gained; and if we have succeeded in preserving the glory of the traditions that had been written by the American soldiers who had fought under their country's flag before us, then we have truly lived up to a great ideal.

The experiences of war bring many trying ordeals to the soldier and many, many times the sight of his country's flag has brought to a faltering warrior the courage and inspiration to achieve heroic things. But the ordeals of life are not confined to the battlefield and there will be many times in the future, as in the past, when real ordeals will present themselves to the judge who presides over this Court, to the lawyer who practices before it, and to the

citizens who come here in various capacities to appear before this Court. May we not hope that just as the sight of the American flag has many times been an inspiration to the soldier in battle, that so also the sight of the flag may be an inspiration to those who come into this courtroom, from the merest spectator up to the presiding judge himself, to the end that all may conduct themselves in accordance with those ideals of justice and fearlessness, tempered with mercy, for which this flag has always stood.

I once heard an American describe a triumphal parade of the allied troops through the streets of Paris after the Armistice. The parade was reviewed by high representatives of practically all of the Allied governments. This American told of his pride in the superior appearance of the American soldiers as they passed the reviewing stand. He was impressed by the fact that these soldiers cared nothing for the potentates and peers who reviewed them nor for the panoply and pomp which surrounded the parade; rather they seemed to march with an eye single for the flag that waved at the head of their column—a flag that typified ideals of government and hope for the oppressed, unique in the world's history—and for these American soldiers that emblem possessed a beauty and a distinction that claimed their whole attention and their unstinted devotion. That flag possesses the same significance in this courtroom. It represents the power of a government, that is powerful because it represents the will of a great people; and that flag represents not alone the power of that government but also its justice—a justice that is dispensed alike to rich and to poor, to native-born and to immigrant, to those of high and of low degree, without distinction of class or color, race or creed. As we present this flag today and respectfully ask that it be displayed in this courtroom we do so with the hope that in peacetime, as in wartime, the people of our community may not be distracted by false doctrines or

wrong philosophies of government, but that they may serve as true Americans with an eye single for the sound principle and high ideals which are the foundation of the government which proclaims its existence the world over by displaying this beautiful flag.