

*We the People: The Citizen and the Constitution* is a civics textbook that is currently being used in many high schools throughout the country. By its own admission, this book is a "project of the Center for Civic Education, funded by the U.S. Department of Education by act of Congress."

This subsidized textbook is sowing the seeds of doubt in our nation's school children, getting them to question the brilliant principles our Founding Fathers instilled in the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. What follows is an analysis of just some of the antithetical principles that are taught in this civics textbook:

1. Ignoring the clearest limitation upon the federal government. While the book does mention the concept of "enumerated powers" as a historical matter (p. 70), it never mentions the one constitutional provision which today most clearly articulates this principle of a limited federal government. That provision is the Tenth Amendment.

The Amendment states that whatever powers are not granted to the federal government are reserved to the states and the people. (Thus, if the Constitution gives no authority to federal officials to regulate firearms, then they have no authority to pass federal gun control laws.) But the book NEVER discusses the Tenth Amendment at all. Not once. It is not even mentioned in the section dealing with the Bill of Rights!

2. Skewed view of federalism. What the book has to say about federalism is OK to a certain extent. What's not OK is the information that is left out for the student. The father of the Constitution, James Madison, described *federalism* in Federalist Paper 45 as a system of government where *few* powers were delegated to the national authorities: "The powers delegated by the proposed Constitution to the federal government are *few and defined*. Those which are to remain in the State governments are *numerous and indefinite*."

Just as important, Madison said in Federalist Paper 51, that, "In the compound republic of America... a double security arises to the rights of the people. The different [state and federal] governments will control each other, at the same time that each will be controlled by itself."

Here's where the book's omission is crucial. Madison said the state governments could serve as a "check" on the federal government. But this concept seems to be absent in *We the People*, even as a historical view which the founders held (see Lesson 22, pp. 113-116). The idea one gets from reading the chapter on federalism is that *federalism*

is simply a convenient way for the federal and state governments to distribute the workload.

This view, of course, inevitably treats the federal government as the octopus head which can dictate to the tentacles (the states) what they must do. This thinking has pervaded our nation's capital for many years and has led to a continuing loss of freedom, including the rise of many unconstitutional gun control laws. To be sure, this view was certainly not the Founders' view of federalism.

3. Second Amendment rights denigrated. The Second Amendment isn't even mentioned in the section discussing which articles in the Bill of Rights are relevant today! (pp. 153-187).

And while the book does discuss the Second Amendment in a *historical* context, it does so in a way that causes the student to start questioning the wisdom of the amendment. For example, the book asks the student on p. 101:

Do you think the Second Amendment is as important today as it was in the eighteenth century? Explain your answer.

What limitations, if any, do you think should be placed on the right to bear arms? How would you justify those limits?

In other words, the right to keep and bear arms is a mere privilege that is here today and gone tomorrow.

4. Unalienable vs. evolving rights. As mentioned in the preceding point, the book treats our constitutional, unalienable rights as privileges which evolve over time. But the "rights" listed in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights are treated as universal principles that should be adopted in every nation.

In the chapter on the U.S. Bill of Rights, the student is encouraged to think about LIMITATIONS we should place on the Second Amendment. But such questions are never asked with regard to the UN charter. To the contrary, Questions 4 and 5 on p. 208 encourage the student to surmise which UN "rights" we need more of in this country.

After encouraging the student to read the UN document, the book asks:

What rights, if any, in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights should be established in the United States? How should they be established? Explain your position.

Unless the student miss the clear point of all this, the book concludes this section on p. 208 saying that, "These rights [found in the UN declaration] express the objectives worthy of any just society."

Now, why was this not said about our own Bill of Rights?

5. Citizenship evolving towards UN citizenship. The book's love fest with the United Nations does not end with praise for the UN Declaration and the so-called rights listed in its charter. The book also gets the student to consider citizenship in the UN, telling the pupil that we live in a "global village" and that the culture we live in is "becoming cosmopolitan, that is,

belonging to the whole world" (p. 202).

Moreover, the book says that the concept of citizenship has evolved over the years --from state citizenship in the past to national citizenship in the present (*Ibid*). As for the future? Well, after telling the child that citizenship evolves over time, the book says,

Although national citizenship is likely to remain fundamentally important in the future, the issues confronting American citizens are increasingly international [and] require an awareness of *political associations that are larger in scope than the nation-state*. (*Ibid*, emphasis added.)

Nice plug for the UN. And quite a triumph for those who think American sovereignty is an outdated concept.

Of course, some children might miss the subtleties intended by the authors, so they offer teachers the following discussion questions to end the chapter: "What advantages might be offered by world citizenship? What disadvantages? Do you think that world citizenship will be possible in your lifetime?" (p. 203).

Do you think civics books from 50 years ago would even have dared to ask such questions?

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