

Comments on "Education for Democracy"

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One of the new features of transformational education is its focus on transnational study of government. This approach goes by titles like: "Education for Democracy," "Essential Elements of Constitutional Democracy," and "Human Rights Education." The goal here is to focus the study of government on so-called universal principles of democracy or human rights, rather than focusing on United States Government and why it has been successful.

This approach to education is "transnational" because it deals with all democracies equally, rather than emphasizing the United States. It is "transformational" because it aggressively promotes a particular ideological viewpoint. That is, it wishes to convince American students (indoctrination) that the United States should "get with the program" and adopt those supposed universal standards of human rights and democracy rather than take the "narrow view" that the United States has something superior to offer the world.

There are several descriptions of "education for democracy" currently under discussion. We shall here evaluate one of them; it is called "Constitutional Democracy" and has been developed by the Center for Civic Education (CCE), the same NGO that wrote *The National Standards For Civics And Government*, (funded by our tax dollars), and *We The People: The Citizen And The Constitution*, and which conducts international education programs on Civics and Government (also funded by the American taxpayers).

The reader is encouraged to read the entire (eight page) article found on the CCE web site (<http://civiced.org/constdem.html>). The author's review of this CCE article follows:

Part one of the article is called, "Constitutional Democracy: An Outline of Essential Elements" It says:

What are the essential characteristics and principles of Constitutional Democracy?

CONSTITUTIONAL DEMOCRACY is the antithesis of arbitrary rule. It is democracy characterized by:

- A. POPULAR SOVEREIGNTY.** The people are the ultimate source of authority of the government which derives its right to govern from their consent.
- B. MAJORITY RULE AND MINORITY RIGHTS.** Although "the majority rules," the fundamental rights of individuals in the minority are protected.
- C. LIMITED GOVERNMENT.** The powers of government are limited by law and a written or unwritten constitution which those in power obey.
- D. LIMITATIONS OF POWERS.** There are certain institutional and procedural devices which limit the powers of government. ...

Author's comments:

In the next seven pages, the article explains what it means by the four "Essential Elements" of democracy outlined above. These four characteristics listed above certainly are important elements of a democracy, but keep in mind that the four characteristics listed are supposed to answer the question: "What are the essential characteristics and principles of constitutional democracy?" Does this list of four items provide an adequate list of such "essential elements"? Perhaps we should look at what is missing? Following is a list of important principles of freedom, according to the U.S. Declaration of Independence and Constitution, which are absent from the list of so called "essential elements" of democracy as defined by the Center for Civic Education (CCE):

1. National Sovereignty. Nowhere in the eight pages of text does the CCE mention national sovereignty, not even in passing. National sovereignty is out of sight and out of mind. The CCE's textbook, *We The People: The Citizen And The Constitution*, never mentions national sovereignty, either. In contrast to the position of the CCE, our Declaration of Independence begins with national sovereignty. If national sovereignty is not among the "essential elements" of a democracy, then the kind of democracy envisioned by the CCE must at least be open to the disbanding of national sovereignty and the creation of world federalism instead. Democracy won't mean much, if anything, of course, in a one-world government system.

2. Natural law. Also missing in action is natural law, the second stated principle of freedom in the Declaration of Independence. Natural law -- the universal principles of morality -- is interconnected with unalienable rights, as the founders of our nation clearly understood. Why, for example, do all persons have a right to life? The reason is that the right to life is part of the universal moral code which governs all human society. That is why murder is morally wrong. It is not the law that makes murder wrong. The universal moral code makes murder wrong. Our forefathers knew this truth. This is why they listed natural law in the Declaration of Independence as being fundamental to a free society. Our forefathers recognized that the God-given rights can only be protected if natural law is followed, and that laws are just only if they are based on the universal moral code.

3. Self-evident truths. Also absent from the CCE's definition of "essential characteristics" of democracy is "self-evident truths," listed as the third principle of freedom in our Declaration of Independence. The term "principles" used by the CCE is weaker than the word "truths." We could speak, for example, of the "principles" of Freudianism, and we would be merely speaking of constructs, not truths. By avoiding the word "truth," the CCE is leaving the door open for their description of "essential characteristics" to be interpreted as mere constructs which have no necessary connection to truth. Constructs can be changed at any time -- hardly the basis for an enduring system of freedom.

4. Unalienable rights. The CCE speaks of human rights as being "fundamental" and "individual," but it never describes them as they are stated in our Declaration of Independence, as being "unalienable" and "God-given." If human rights are not inherent (unalienable), they are granted by government. There are no other possibilities, and whatever government grants, government can withdraw. In other words, the rights that the CCE speak of are not rights in the real sense; they are mere concessions that government makes and that government can withhold at any time -- not an

adequate foundation for a free society. So even though the paper later speaks of the "rights" of life, liberty and property, these rights are never pictured as unalienable. As a consequence, rights to the CCE are not genuine rights in the sense that the Declaration of Independence speaks of rights.

Later in the article, the principles of equality and popular sovereignty are promoted. That is, of the twelve principles of freedom described by the Declaration of Independence, the paper by the CCE advocates only two. The CCE's definition of "constitutional democracy," therefore, is decidedly inferior to the definition of "constitutional republic" as outlined by our Declaration of Independence and Constitution.

5. The right to bear arms. The Second Amendment to our Constitution protects the inherent right of self-defense by means of bearing arms. The CCE document on "essential elements" of democracy never mentions this fundamental right. The right to bear arms is out of sight and out of mind -- not surprising since the *National Standards For Civics And Government*, written by the CCE, similarly omits the right to bear arms. (See *Fed Ed: The New Federal Curriculum And How It's Enforced* by Allen Quist.)

6. Powers reserved to the people. The Tenth Amendment to our Constitution, the last amendment in the Bill of Rights, clarifies that those rights not delegated to the federal government are reserved for the states or the people respectively. These undesignated rights are commonly known as the "reserved powers" or "reserved rights." The concept of reserved rights recognizes that the people have numerous rights not mentioned in the Constitution. These basic rights are inherent in the citizens, not granted by government. It follows, then, that any rights not specifically designated to the government by the Constitution still belong to the people. Reserved rights and inherent rights are two sides of the same coin. Neither reserved rights nor inherent rights are recognized by the CCE's description of what it calls "essential elements" of democracy.

7. The Rights of the child. The principles of freedom that the CCE omits are not the only cause for concern. Equally troublesome are the positions the CCE inserts in their stead. On page 6 of the article, the CCE states:

Parents ... and national governments recognize the rights of the child ... in accord with the principles of the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

The UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child is a radical document. It says, for example, that parents may not impose their religious beliefs on their children. It alleges that spanking is child abuse. The United Nations is now putting pressure on Canada to make laws making spanking illegal on the grounds that Canada has agreed to the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child.

The obvious right of parents to govern their children is abrogated by the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child and the CCE's view of democracy. The rights of parents are among the many reserved rights under our Constitution. If one doesn't accept the reserved powers doctrine, then the fundamental rights of parents, and numerous other rights, are vulnerable.

8. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The CCE article also says: "These [fundamental] rights may be [explained by] ... the Universal Declaration of Human Rights ..." This UN document, however, clarifies its view of human rights when it states: "These rights and freedoms may in no case be exercised contrary to the purposes and principles of the United Nations." That is, the decisions of government in general, and the policies of the UN in particular, take priority over our basic human rights. Rights that have lower standing than government policies do not amount to very much. It should also be noted that this view -- that government policies have higher standing than human rights -- is the same view of rights that is recognized by Communist governments.

What, then, should we make of this strategy by the CCE and others to focus on "essential elements of democracy" instead of focusing on the principles of freedom which establish the foundation of government in the United States? The CCE's viewpoint is clearly inferior to that of the foundational principles of our own nation. Why should we ignore our own system of freedom and look elsewhere? The reason is that the foundational principles of freedom, which under gird the United States, which are also the pillars of freedom available to any and all countries of the world, must be undermined by the radicals in order to create their utopia dream-world of world government.