

Americans need to study the Constitution

by Randy Bright - February 12, 2009

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As I write this column, Congress is still fighting over the Stimulus bill, which will lead this country deeper into debt and much closer to socialism by the social programs and dependency it will create. Americans are told that this bill is critical to the survival of the country, even as we are learning that when the spending bill was approved last year, economic indicators now show things weren't quite as bad as was once originally thought. Bad, but not as bad. And now we are learning that the current Stimulus bill is full of unnecessary spending that is unlikely to create long-term jobs.

Americans in recent generations have not been taught the principles that our Constitution embodies; many or perhaps most young people have been given (maybe) a cursory version of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence, neglecting to instill the values that the Founders knew were necessary for this republic to survive.

At the core of these documents is the central theme of inalienable rights, or natural rights, that come only from God. These are rights that can't be taken from us unless we chose to forfeit them. Others may deprive us of these rights, or prevent us from exercising these rights, but no government or sovereign power can ever actually take them away from us.

Neither the Declaration of Independence or the Constitution specifically lists all of these rights, but the writers of the Declaration of Independence did include the phrase, "that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness."

W. Cleon Skouson, in his book *The 5000 Year Leap*, gives a list of examples of these rights:

"The right of self-government.

The right to bear arms for self-defense.

The right to own, develop and dispose of property.

The right to make personal choices.

The right of free conscience.

The right to choose a profession.

The right to choose a mate.

The right to beget one's kind.

The right to assemble.

The right to petition.

The right to free speech.

The right to enjoy the fruits of one's labors.

The right to improve one's position through barter and sale.

The right to contrive and invent.

The right to explore the natural resources of the earth.

The right to privacy.

The right to provide personal security.

The right to provide nature's necessities - air, food, water, clothing and shelter.

The right to a fair trial.

The right of free association.

The right to contract.”

But Skouson also points out that we have inalienable duties as well.

“The duty to honor the supremacy of the Creator and his laws.

The duty not to steal or destroy the property of another.

The duty to be honest in all transactions with others.

The duty of children to honor and obey their parents and elders.

The duty of parents and elders to protect, teach, feed, clothe, and provide shelter for children.

The duty to support law and order and to keep the peace.

The duty not to contrive through a covetous heart to despoil another.

The duty to provide insofar as possible for the needs of the helpless - the sick, the crippled, the injured, the poverty-stricken.

The duty to honorably perform contracts and covenants both with God and man.

The duty to be temperate.

The duty to become economically self-sufficient.

The duty not to trespass on the property or privacy of another.

The duty to maintain the integrity of the family structure.

The duty to perpetuate the race.

The duty not to promote or participate in the vices which destroy personal and community life.

The duty to perform civic responsibilities - vote, assist public officials, serve in official capacities when called upon, stay informed on public issues, volunteer where needed.

The duty not to aid or abet those involved in criminal or anti-social activities.

The duty to support personal and public standards of common decency.

The duty to follow rules of moral rectitude.”

Perhaps if Americans were taught, or they would finally realize, what their inalienable rights and inalienable duties were, we would not be watching in virtual helplessness or apathy the wasteful and unconstitutional behavior we are witnessing in Congress now. What we are seeing is nothing more than the birth of socialism.

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