

Not understanding constitutional principles is damaging

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Recently I have been discussing a book that I think all Americans should read, and that should be taught in every school in America – The 5000 Year Leap.

The premise of the book is that until the Constitution and Bill of Rights came into being, mankind's standard of living had remained virtually unchanged for the past five-thousand years. Within two hundred years after the adoption of these documents, Americans had made huge leaps in standard of living and in innovation in technologies.

Why this is so important to America is that America has been gradually dumbed down over the past century, and as a result we no longer understand the principles underlying our Constitution and our Bill of Rights and are suffering the consequences. Our economy suffers, our families suffer, and our citizens live in a state of confusion about what it even means to be an American.

In part this is about a systemic and purposeful rejection of God, which is tragic especially when you realize that you don't have to believe in God for the system to work, even though it is a system designed around Biblical principles. It is the ultimate example of throwing the baby out with the bathwater – we will reject God even though we know at the same time we would be rejecting all of the good things in life that come with living by these principles.

One of the first quandaries the Founders had to come to grips with was how to provide freedom and still maintain an orderly and healthy society. Skousen (the author of the book) demonstrates their solution with a diagram with tyranny on the left side and anarchy on the right side.

With tyranny, all law is provided by a single ruler (a dictator), and all law is fluid according to the day-by-day whims of the ruler.

With anarchy, there is no law; all people do as they want to do.

In the center of the diagram is the People's Law, which is the healthy balance of the two extremes.

In regards to our built environment – our zoning laws, how we design our cities, how we design our buildings, and our priorities for the environment and energy – we have gone from a healthy balance between tyranny and anarchy, to an increasingly tyrannical system of laws and codes that are intended to force a particular outcome.

As an example, many (if not most) urban planners insist that the correct way to live is in the urban (not suburban) environment; it is there that we can be freed from our need for automobiles, big homes and big yards, and be presented with mass transit, affordable homes (apartments), and bikeable and walkable communities. The stated goal is to provide better lives through social justice.

But this is only achievable through income redistribution. Mass transit is heavily subsidized through taxation; affordable homes are homes that are subsidized through taxation. Making communities bikeable and walkable is an expensive conversion that is either subsidized through direct taxation or indirectly by forcing developers to pay for amenities that they would not ordinarily see a return on their investment.

Wealth redistribution is working very well – almost a third of Americans (92 million according to a report this week) are not working, but for all practical purposes, few of them are starving, homeless, or without a car or cellphone, thanks to government subsidies. All of us are living under this “soft” tyranny, and a third of us are being trained to be hopeless, lazy or both.

Skousen wrote, “The Founders also warned that the only way for the nation to prosper was to have equal protection of ‘rights’, and not allow government to get involved in trying to provide equal distribution of “things.” They also warned against the pooling of property as advocated by the proponents of communism. Samuel Adams said they had done everything possible to make the ideas of socialism and communism unconstitutional.”

Samuel Adams wrote, “The Utopian schemes of leveling (re-distribution of the wealth) and a community of goods (central ownership of the means of production and distribution) are as visionary and impractical as those which vest all property in the Crown. (These ideas) are arbitrary, despotic, and, in our government, unconstitutional.”

The laws and regulations that affect our built environment are but one example of how worthwhile systems are being manipulated to achieve a political goal, and in so doing, Americans lives are being destroyed. What happens when the other two-thirds of us succumb to this system?

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