



STATE BOARD of EDUCATION TEXTBOOK HEARING
August 23, 2002
High School World History Textbooks Proposed for Adoption
Scott Harris

The Culture We Deserve

My name is Scott Harris and I represent the Texas Public Policy Foundation, for which I did textbook reviews, and the National Association of Scholars, of which I am a member.

Postmodernism has dominated the universities for three decades, moving from the pursuit of truth to the assertion that there is no truth. This has unleashed a torrent of nonsense, in which high school history books are awash.

Postmodernism is about power structures. If one group has been in power for a period of time, they are oppressors. The oppressed are any group that has not been in power. History is then rewritten to “level the playing field.” As George Orwell wrote, “He who controls the past controls the future.”

There are two parts to being politically correct: *things you can't say*, and *things you must say*. In the books I reviewed, there was a systematic selection of anti-Western views. Instead, there should be balance. Both the good and bad of Western and non-Western societies should be presented.

In McDougal Littell's *Pattern of Interaction*, several opinions of Columbus' voyage to America are listed (p. 489). In one, the *publisher* claims that a Native American cited “disputes the so-called benefits that resulted from Columbus' voyages.” If the benefits are “so-called” let the person being quoted make that claim. The publisher did not refer to the pros and cons of any other viewpoint as “so-called.” Further, this viewpoint was listed in colored, bold type, in a font size twice as big as

any opposing viewpoints. Students know that important things in a chapter are highlighted this way.

In the same book, Huldrych Zwingli, a key Reformation figure, is absent. Instead, there are six paragraphs of “women [who] played prominent roles in the Reformation” (*Ibid.*, p. 434). Katheriana Zell’s prominent role was that she “once scolded a minister for speaking harshly of another.” This act is admirable, but certainly not “prominent.” Similarly, Katherina von Bora “played a more typical, behind-the-scenes role... [her] well-run household became a model for others to follow.” Are we to believe that her well-run house was widely and popularly known, and that it had an impact on the Reformation? Women should be included, but let us not glorify common things, gild daily life, and call it prominent.

Despite the fact that the TEKS call for the explanation of capitalism and free enterprise, there is no systematic explanation of what capitalism is. Instead socialism receives over *ten times* the coverage of capitalism. If you add the number of pages listed in the indices of all four books, the entry “Capitalism” receives 19 pages and “Socialism/Communism” receive 191 pages.

Capitalism is often divided into false categories such as “commercial,” “industrial,” and “State capitalism.” Commerce and industry are *functions of* capitalism, not types. “State capitalism” is an oxymoron. (Incidentally, this type of capitalism is brought up in reference to Japan, in which government involvement is “cited as the key reason for the efficiency of Japanese industry and the emergence of the country as an industrial giant” [Glencoe, p. 958]. Government is known for many things; efficiency is not one of them. Of course, more likely reasons, such as the work of Dr. Edward Deming, are ignored, as are the opinion of modern economists who blame the crash of the Asian markets in the late 90’s on the involvement of the State. Again, the student is left to believe something that isn’t quite so.)

Any alleged progress caused by capitalistic technology is suspiciously questioned, “if people moved five times faster would they *really* be happier?” Students are not asked to consider the advantages of technology, but instead to consider “What advantages a slower pace of life or living in a more rural environment might have” (both, McDougal-Litell, p. 658). Instead of being asked to consider the unifying and uplifting effect on citizens of cars, radios and telephones, students are instead asked to consider “the consequences of such inventions... on people too poor to afford these things.” Student conclusion? Technology oppresses.

Thomas Malthus and David Ricardo are listed as intellectual builders of capitalism, even though the viewpoint or ideas for which each is known have proved false. Students are left to think that capitalism has inherent flaws that have since proved to be myths. The nicknaming of economics as “the dismal science” is listed under capitalism (Holt, p.

560), yet socialism “grew out of an optimistic view of human nature, a belief in progress....” (McDougal Littell, p. 648).

Robert Owens is listed as a socialist who improved the lives of workers by improving the environment in which they worked. Only half the books mentioned that his experiments failed after three years. Some even call it a success, or that it inspired others communities to succeed. The most successful “inspired” group was the Rochdale Pioneers Co-op Society in 1844. By it’s own workers admission, it sold lower quality, higher priced goods, was open for limited hours, and sold only five goods. It was in debt to other shopkeepers, and some of its own members were ashamed to shop there. The co-op eventually improved somewhat, becoming known for their purity of goods and being honest.

Yet the legendary purity of goods sold by Gustavus Swift or John D. Rockefeller goes unmentioned. Rockefeller’s honesty, which compelled him to write a check for .37 cents – because he owed it – goes unmentioned, replaced by stories of predatory pricing, which court records show never happened. He is referred to as ruthless and raising prices after he drove competitors out of business (Prentice Hall, pp. 549-550). *This simply isn’t true (The Myth of the Robber Barons, Burt Folsom).*

Henry Ford paid his workers \$5.00 a day when the going rate was .85 per day. Yet the only mention of Ford is his use of the assembly line. It seems capitalists are worth mentioning only when they improve technology, but not when they improve the lives of their workers.

Robert Fulton and his English counterparts are listed as making “improvements” in water transportation. Fulton was an abject failure, once his government enforced monopoly was ruled illegal. Cornelius Vanderbilt revolutionized and made affordable both domestic and trans-Atlantic water travel for *rich and poor alike*. No book even mentions the Commodore. There is one Vanderbilt mentioned, however; it seems one Conseulo Vanderbilt married the Duke of Marlborough, bringing her already wealthy husband ten million dollars (Glencoe, p. 623).

Aztecs are portrayed as being oppressed by the Spaniards, yet there is little to no mention of the enemy tribes that lined up to help the Spaniards, due to the Aztec practices of slavery, human sacrifice and cannibalism. Incan’s Imperialism falls under headings such as “Creates Unity” and “Organizes Communities” (McDougal Littell, p. 408) while the British “Expand Control” (p. 701).

Africans such as King Affonso and Futa Toro, whose efforts to stop the slave trade were fruitless, received nearly *five times* the coverage that the British/North American abolitionist movement received, even though it actually stopped the trade

For postmodernists no distinction is made between the earned and the unearned, oppressors and liberators. They are intent on righting power structures in history, to make the first last, and the last first. In Orwell’s slogans of tyranny were “War is Peace,” “Freedom is Slavery,”

“Ignorance is Strength.” Now we may add “Capitalism is Oppression,” and “Socialism is Freedom.”

Students are left to believe that help in this world comes from the government and non-westerners. The free institutions of this country represent the zenith of the human experience; it is the greatest achievement of humanity. However, this country, like all others, will eventually collapse. And when it does, the commentary will be predictable. It will be said that we collapsed of our own dead weight: our arrogance, our hubris, our excess. The enemies of freedom will cheer. They always *knew* it wouldn't work.

But the Voice of Freedom will protest, reminding us that we did not collapse from excess. We will have collapsed from an altogether different sin: INFIDELITY. Infidelity to the very institutions that made this country great. The institutions that have eliminated slavery, raised law above men, lifted the masses out of wretched poverty, brought women and children rights not dreamed of, to the point that most moderns live better than kings of old.

The institutions of free enterprise, limited government, private property, and individual rights must be preserved and championed. Not because they are somebody's privileged viewpoint, but because they *are the only things that have worked*, in all of history.

Free institutions are the only thing preventing humanity from sliding back into the barbarism that was the past. We must maintain our fidelity and preserve what humanity has worked so hard to achieve. We must stop the drift from multiculturalism to cultural Marxism and maintain the culture we deserve.