

AMERICANS SHOULD KNOW MORE OF AMERICANISM AS WELL AS ALIENS

Pivotal Point in American History is the Revolution Unknown in This Day to Many of Our Own. John Adams Defied the Difference Between New and Old World Institutions

There has been a heavy output of Americanization literature since the war. Books, magazine articles and pamphlets have literally flooded the market offering ways and means for Americanizing the alien. But what about the American? Is the ordinary American child familiar with the essential points in American history? Are the principles of American government clearly set before the minds of the high school and college youth of the land?

"This country will not be a good place for any of us to live in unless we make it a good place for all of us to live in." Theodore Roosevelt once told an American audience. And it cannot be a good place for all of us unless we are conscious of our heritage of American history in the schools.

Must Plant Principles.

The pivotal point of American history is the Revolution and unless the principles of the Revolution are firmly implanted in the young mind that mind will grow to maturity in a frame utterly un-American. It will only differ in degree from the alien mind.

There has been in recent days a tendency to misinterpret those principles and to minimize their importance. Well-meaning people intensely interested in promoting a better understanding between Britain and America have endeavored to rewrite American history, to interpret the Revolution in terms of a family squabble. Their purpose of course has been noble. Their idea may be formulated in the very simple proposition that the peace of the world can be secured by a proper understanding between the United States and Great Britain. It is in the means employed at arriving at this proper understanding that the error lies.

During the months of May and June of 1919, various units of the American Army of Occupation in Germany were entertained by J. Travis Mills, staff lecturer in history to the University Extension societies of Oxford, Cambridge and London. The lecture is now published in book form.

Cause of Revolution.

The lecturer begins with a sentence from Lecky who in describing the policy of the Grenville administration (1763-6) declares that the British prime minister resolved to enforce strictly the trade laws, to establish permanently in America a portion of the British army, and to raise by parliamentary taxation of America at least a part of the money necessary for its support.

"These three measures produced the American Revolution." Admitting these facts the British lecturer seeks further for their explanation, reflecting as inaccurate those "magic syllables 'The Stamp Act' and the bogus cry 'No taxation without representation.'"

Mr. Mills doesn't say how an American soldier audience took this insult to their Americanism but in page after page he endeavors to make out what he calls the British "case." He does so. In so doing he unwittingly emphasizes the difference between the British and American ideas of government. "It was the sovereignty of the British parliament to which they objected."

The American Theory.

It was the rejection of the parliamentary theory of government that made America and instituted a form of government as different from the British form as it is different from any other form, French or German or Italian. For the parliamentary theory was the British "case."

Parliament was supreme, from it was no appeal. It was the source of the people's rights, and British lawyers had made it omnipotent. Burke could thunder his warnings and remind his English hearers that Americans were not thinking in terms of parliamentary sovereignty. It did not matter to British peer or commoner. Did not they constitute the law of the land? What rights

had the Americans against the empire? They wanted representation in Westminster, those rebellious colonials. And in this claim they clearly proved how little they appreciated the parliamentary system. For they wanted to represent America while even Burke who was more keen to sense their ambitions than any other member of the Lords of Commons, and was shrewder in divining whither those ambitions would lead, would have told them that according to the parliamentary system the American representative in Westminster would represent not America only but the empire.

Who Is Supreme?

Here then was the clear-cut issue. Was parliament supreme or were the people supreme? Great Britain maintained that parliament was supreme. This was her case. It was lost when Burgoyne surrendered and a new theory of government began. And serious students of government have always admitted the difference from the days of Burke in the eighteenth century to the days of Bryce in the twentieth century.

Of course it was not lost in England. There the system is still functioning. The colonies are dependent on parliament. But the signers of the Declaration buried the parliamentary idea when a wit of their number declared: "We had better all hang together, gentlemen, or we shall surely hang separately." And the States in ratifying the Constitution

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put a lasting monument over the grave of the parliamentary idea in America.

Nothing In Common.

John Quincy Adams in his address before the New York Historical society in 1839 on the "Jubilee of the Constitution" brings out very clearly that there was nothing in common between the Declaration and the Articles of Confederation.

The foundations of the former were a superintending Providence—the rights of man, and the constituent revolutionary power of the people. That of the latter was the sovereignty of organized power and the independence of the separate or disunited States. The fabric of the Declaration and that of the Confederation were each consistent with its own foundation but they could not form one consistent symmetrical edifice. They were the productions of different minds and of adverse passions—one ascending from the foundation of human government to the laws of nature and of God, written upon the heart of man—the other resting upon human institutions, and prescriptive law and colonial charters. The cornerstone of one was right—that of the other was power. The Declaration of Independence

and the Constitution of the United States are parts of one consistent whole, founded upon one and the same theory of government.

John Quincy Adams was an American of Americans and until now a foreign-born man imbued with the principles he vindicated they cannot be Americanized. How he would have answered the fatuous assertion of Smuts that the "Dominions look upon America as the oldest of them." She left our circle a long while ago because of a great historic mistake. Adams would have pointed out that the historic mistake hinged upon principles of government.

He might have added that the American principles of government rooted in the Declaration and the Constitution are as different from the modern British theories as they are from Japanese or Chinese governmental ideals. It is in the recognition of differences as well as likenesses that the way to cordial international understanding lies. Not pretty phrases nor compliments exchanged among diplomats, but truth must form the basis of an understanding between the peoples of the world.

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