The Government Class Book

I am currently working on adding another political science reprint on the Constitution. *The Government Class Book* was written by Andrew W Young, the author of *Science of Government*, *First Lessons in Civil Government*, *American Statesman* and *Citizen's Manual of Government and Law*. It was originally published in 1865 and not only covers the Constitution, but gives brief descriptions of several law concepts.

The book has the advantage of being published closer to the date of the adoption of the Constitution. Thus, it is probably closer in explaining what the founding fathers desired than the "civics" books of today.

The book is in reprint through other sources and can be found free in several places including Project Gutenberg. I am in the process of formatting and editing and I hope to have it published by the end of the week at Lulu.com.

So why am I adding a book that you can get for free or from other sources? The intent of this article is to make you aware that it exist. As for why I am reprinting it, I am doing so for my sake. To have a hard copy that I can read and annotate. The same reason that I publish many classic books.

Preface.

The utility of the diffusion of political knowledge among a people exercising the right of self-government, is universally admitted. The form of government established by the people of the United States, though well adapted to promote the general welfare, is highly complicated; and the knowledge requisite to administer it successfully can not be acquired without much study. From the fact that a large portion of the American people are greatly deficient in this knowledge, we may justly conclude that it will never become general, until it shall

have been made an object of school instruction.

The administration of the government of this great and rapidly increasing republic, will, in a few years, devolve upon those who are now receiving instruction in the public schools. Yet thousands annually complete their school education, who have never devoted any time to the study of the principles of the government in which they are soon to take a part—who become invested with political power without the preparation necessary to exercise it with discretion. The schools are regarded as the nurseries of our future statesmen. They share largely in the bounty of the state; yet few of them render in return even the rudiments of political science to those who are to become her legislators, and governors, and judges. Not only in the common schools generally, but in a large portion of the high schools and seminaries, this science is not included in the course of instruction.

To many of the most enlightened friends of education and of our free institutions, it has long been a matter of surprise as well as regret, that those to whom the educational interests of the states are more immediately intrusted, should so long have treated the study in question as of minor importance, or have suffered it to be excluded by studies of far less practical utility. The Regents of the University of the State of New York have repeatedly noticed the neglect of this study in the academies and seminaries subject to their visitation; and they mention it as a remarkable fact, that in many of them preference is given to the study of the Grecian and Roman antiquities. They say: “The constitutions, laws, manners, and customs of ancient Greece and Rome are made subjects of regular study, quarter after quarter, while our own constitutional jurisprudence, and the every day occurring principles of our civil jurisprudence, are not admitted as a part of the academic course!”

To persons who are to engage in any of the industrial or professional pursuits, a preparatory course of training or discipline is deemed indispensable to success. Yet many assume the weighty responsibilities of freemen, and allow their sons

to do the same, with scarcely any knowledge of a freeman's duties. On the intelligent exercise of political power, the public prosperity and the security of our liberties mainly depend. Every person, therefore, who is entitled to the rights of a citizen, is justly held responsible for the proper performance of his political duties. And any course of popular instruction which fails to impart a knowledge of our system of government, must be materially defective.

With a view to supply this deficiency, the author, many years since, prepared his "Introduction to the Science of Government." This work soon attained considerable popularity, both as a class book in schools, and as a book for private reading and reference for adults. Not being deemed, however, sufficiently elementary for the children and youth in most of our common schools, another work, entitled, "First Lessons in Civil Government," was written to meet the capacities of younger or less advanced scholars than those for whom the previous work was designed.

The favorable reception of these works by the public, and the assurances of their usefulness to thousands who have studied them, are to the author a source of high gratification, and an ample reward for many years of arduous labor. The value of these works has, however, been in a measure impaired by changes in the government and laws since the time of their first publication. The latter, especially, descending so minutely into the details of the government of the state for which alone it is intended, requires frequent revisions.

It has occurred to the author that a new work, more permanent in the character of its matter, and adapted for use in all the states, is demanded to supply the deficiency in the present course of education. Stimulated by a desire to bear some part in laying a solid foundation for our republican institutions, and encouraged by the success of his former labors in this department of education, he has, after a suspension of several years, resumed his efforts in this enterprise, in the hope that, with the cooeperation of teachers, and those having official supervision of the schools, it may be carried forward

to an early consummation; when the principles of government shall be made a subject of regular study in the schools, and the elements of a sound political education shall be accessible to the mass of American youth. And he flatters himself, that the attention he has given to this subject has enabled him to prepare a work adapted, in a good degree, to meet the existing want of the schools.

Many words and phrases, as they occur in the course of the work, have been defined; and an attempt has been made to explain the several subjects in such a manner as to render them intelligible to youth.

The object which it is the purpose of this work to aid in effecting, claims the earnest attention of parents. Every father, at least, is bound to see that his sons have the means of acquiring a good political education. He can not innocently suffer them to pass from under his guardianship unprepared to discharge their political duties.

The study of this work should not be confined to male pupils. It has long been considered a striking defect in our system of education, that females are not more generally instructed in the principles of civil government, and in matters of business. Although they take no active part in public affairs, the knowledge here commended would enable them to exert a far more powerful and salutary influence upon our national character and destiny. As wives, mothers, teachers, and especially as counselors of the other sex, they could apply this knowledge to valuable purposes. And the question is submitted, whether it would not contribute more to their usefulness than some of those accomplishments which form so large a part of a modern female education, and which are usually lost amidst the cares of married life.

To preserve and transmit the blessings of constitutional liberty, we need a healthful patriotism. But a genuine love of country is hardly to be expected where there is not a proper appreciation of our political institutions, which give it its preeminence among nations. And how can they be duly appreciated if they are not understood? It has been one of the

objects of the writer to bring to view the chief excellencies of our system of government, and thus to lay, in the minds of youth, the basis of an enlightened and conservative patriotism.
That this work, as an elementary treatise on civil government, is not susceptible of improvement, is not pretended. Such as it is, it is submitted to the judgment of a candid public. If it shall prove in any considerable degree useful, the author’s highest expectations will have been realized.

To Teachers.

To the meritorious, though often undervalued labors of the instructors of American youth, is our country greatly indebted for the successful working of its system of free government; and upon the labors of their successors rest, in an equal degree, all well-founded hopes of its future political prosperity.
The general introduction and profitable study of this work, depend much upon a hearty and active cooeperation of teachers in the enterprise which it is intended to promote. From all who desire to make themselves in the highest degree useful in their profession, such cooeperation is confidently anticipated.
The advantage of instructing a class in civil government, is not confined to the pupils. The teacher will find the exercise both interesting and profitable to himself. Although pains have been taken to adapt the work to the capacities of youth, the definition of many terms and phrases, and the further explanation of many subjects, have necessarily been left to be supplied by teachers. The study and investigation which may in some cases be required to qualify them for the task, will be amply rewarded by their own advancement in political knowledge.
No intelligent teacher, it is presumed, will object to the introduction of this study, on the ground that there is not sufficient time or room for an additional exercise. Useful as

all the branches now taught may be justly deemed, all of them are not, as is a knowledge of government, indispensable to the security of our liberties. The latter is of far greater importance to an American citizen, than a knowledge of some portions of arithmetic and the higher mathematics; and in the opinion of some distinguished educators the time now devoted to these, in many schools, is sufficient to acquire a tolerable political education. It is believed, however, that this study need not exclude, or essentially interfere with, any of the studies pursued in the schools generally. By the more advanced scholars in the common schools, the work may be used as a reading book, and thus a two-fold advantage be gained from its use.

To assist the more inexperienced teachers in conducting the exercise, a few questions have been appended to the chapters. Questions may be added by the teachers at pleasure, or to such extent as may be thought necessary. And it is believed the recitations may be made more profitable to pupils, by requiring them, so far as may be, to give answers in their own words. To some of the printed questions, no answers are furnished by the chapters and sections referred to, but may be found in the Synopsis of the State Constitutions, or other parts of the work. Occasionally questions have been inserted to which no part of the work furnishes the answers.