National Endowment for the Humanities Flunks the Test

January 19,1995 by: Phyllis Schlafly

The media have been taunting Congressman John Kasich to tell exactly which federal programs he would cut out in order to balance the budget. When he included "the National Endowment for the Humanities" in his list, he was right on target.

This agency gave $2 million of the taxpayers' money to a UCLA history project which was supposed to produce a definitive set of standards setting forth how American history should be taught to all students in grades 5 through 12. The 269- page result, called "National Standards for United States History,' is conclusive proof that the Federal Government should NOT be in the position of writing, or sponsoring the writing, of school curricula.

The dictionary defines history as the record of past events. It seems elementary that all schoolchildren should be taught the historical facts about how America became a nation and grew to our present size and greatness, and we didn't need a federal project to tell us that.

"National Standards," however, is not a narrative of past events, but is leftwing revisionism. The book is a prime example of Political Correctness, the first tenet of which is to view everything through the prism of race and gender.

Accordingly, almost every event in American history is described as though it had race or gender motives and effects. It is a grievous disservice to American schoolchildren, as well as historically false, to view the entire panorama of American history as one long conflict about race and gender in which all ethnic groups except white males are portrayed as oppressed and mistreated.

The P.C. flavor is established right off the bat when children are taught that calendar time does not have to be identified as BC (as in Before Christ) or AD (as in Anno Domini), but rather as BCE (Before the Common Era) and CE (Common Era). Completely ignoring the historical fact of the dominance of the Christian religion and its moral values, the student is taught an anonymous quotation from an 18th century New Yorker asserting that "The only princrple of life propagated among the young people is to get money."

Leftwing bias shows itself in the skewed selection of historical figures. Dozens of persons are singled out for study who have had little or no effect on American history, while some of the most influential men in our history are ignored or given scant mention.

Omitted from "National Standards," for example, are Paul Revere, Thomas Edison, the Wright brothers, Gen. Robert E. Lee, Albert Einstein, Jonas Salk, and Gen. Douglas MacArthur. On the other hand, Senator Joseph McCarthy receives 19 mentions (unfavorable, of course) Harriet

Tubman gets six mentions, and students are told to study the influence of MTV, Madonna, Murphy Brown, and Roseanne.

"Standards" includes all sorts of exercises to study and to construct biographical sketches about obscure figures chosen for their race, gender or ethnicity, but makes only one passing reference to George Washington in which the student is told to construct a fictional dialogue between Washington and an Indian leader at the end of the Revolution. Nothing is suggested to be taught about his extraordinary leadership and personal character, military prowess, presidency of the Constitutional Convention, or service as our nation's first executive.

Advocacy of the radical feminist ideology based on victimology runs throughout "National Standards." The 1848 feminist Declaration at Seneca Falls is mentioned six times, making it more important than the U.S. Constitution and the Gettysburg Address, and at least on a par with our Declaration of Independence (which, incidentally, is equated with Zapata's "Plan de Ayala").

Students are instructed to study the National Organization for Women, to read Ms. magazine and feminist books by Betty Friedan and many obscure writers chosen only for their race or gender, and are told that feminism is "compelling in its analysis of women's problems and the solutions offered." No suggestion is made as to why feminism does not appeal to the majority of American women.

Examples of leftwing bias abound. "Standards" tells students to analyze why Truman vetoed the Taft-Hartley Act, but makes no reference to why Congress passed that law over his veto. "Standards' calls on students to evaluate the accomplishments of John F. Kennedy's New Frontier and Lyndon Johnson's Great Society, but they are not told to assess those programs' costs and failures.

"Standards" makes it imperative that 5th and 6th graders define and understand the key terms associated with Watergate, such as "plumbers," "enemies list," and "CREEP." No such importance is laid on understanding the influence of great American inventors such as Thomas Edison, Eli Whitney, Robert Fulton, and their products.

Congressional leaders Henry Clay and Daniel Webster do not exist in "Standards,' but former House Speaker Tip O'Neill is quoted as calling Ronald Reagan "a cheerleader for selfishness."

This history standards project is an implementation of the Goals 2000: Educate America Act, signed by Clinton last year. After the new Congress wipes out the appropriation for the National Endowment for the Humanities, it would be a good idea to repeal Goals 2000, too.