

Lesson Twenty-Three

Too Much Independence

LESSON IDEA

To show why the new government, under the Articles of Confederation, could not correct the chaos and confusion in the country, and why the states had to surrender some of their independence to a federal government.

PREPARATION

Purchase or borrow from a library *Your Rugged Constitution*, by Bruce and Esther Findlay, for reference during this series of lessons. See "During the Week" for specific suggestions for using the book to initiate a study of the Constitution. Have family members memorize the Preamble to the Constitution during the week.

IN 1781 the long war between ragged patriots and polished Englishmen came to an end. The once cocky Redcoats had been defeated, their flag no longer flew over American soil, and their officers and soldiers had been forced to retreat. The would-be conquerors had lost not only the war, but their arrogance. Sulking, they packed up and returned to the safe confines of England. Some may have taken comfort from the knowledge that many Europeans gave the infant nation little chance to survive.

But in America, after a round of exuberant victory celebration, Revolutionary leaders began planning and dreaming of the future. Thomas Paine, the Philadelphia pamphleteer whose inspiring words stirred the spirit of independence in 1776, and who later gave new hope to Washington's ragged army at Valley Forge, penned these prophetic words:

"The times that tried men's souls' are over and the greatest and completest revolution the world ever knew, gloriously and happily accomplished . . . Never, I say, had a country so many openings to happiness as this. Her setting out in life, like the rising of a fair morning, was unclouded and — promising. Her cause was good. Her principles just and liberal. Her temper serene and firm. Her con-

duct regulated by the nicest steps, and everything about her wore the mask of honor. It is not every country (perhaps there is not another in the world) that can boast so fair an origin. Even the first settlement of America corresponds with the character of the Revolution. Rome, once the proud mistress of the universe, was originally a band of ruffians. Plunder and rapine made her rich, and her oppression of millions made her great. But America need never be ashamed to tell her birth, nor relate the stages by which she rose to empire"

Do you think Paine accurately described our nation and her future? Why? [Encourage everyone to answer.]

Paine's words were indeed true. Never had a country had so fair an origin — so unmarked by the crippling ties of the past. Situated between two oceans and cushioned by a wilderness of mountains, plains, and deserts in the West, America was cushioned from the old ideas that had marred the nations of Europe and Asia. In the relative isolation of such surroundings, she could chart her own future, selecting the best attributes of past civilizations without undue pressure from overbearing neighbors.

But such pioneering included adversity as well as adventure. Mistakes, failures, and tough lessons learned were all part of the growing process. The 13 former English colonies worked their way toward nationhood, step-by-step, the hard way.

THE FIRST STEP in creating a new government had been taken immediately after the Declaration of Independence was signed. The all-consuming goal, however, was not union, but states' rights. Each of the 13 states, having opted for independence, was determined to put it into practice by running its own affairs in its own way, while giving no quarter to a central authority or the policies of other states.

It soon became evident, however, that wars

