



Know the Difference Between Marx and Madison? Poll Says Many Do Not

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A recent survey conducted earlier this month by the Harris Interactive polling firm on behalf of the Bill of Rights Institute reveals some startling, disheartening results. According to the survey, 42 percent of the over 2,000 respondents believe that Karl Marx's maxim, "from each according to his ability and to each according to his need [or needs]" is part of one of our nation's founding documents. Further, nearly 20 percent assigned it to the Bill of Rights. When the survey results are fragmented according to age, we find that 30 percent of young adults misidentified Marx's statement as something written in either the *Federalist Papers*, the Declaration of Independence, or the Constitution.

The particulars of the answers to the poll's questions are equally disturbing. Over half of respondents named "education" as a right protected from government encroachment by the First Amendment. Furthermore, not even 20 percent could name the five rights actually guaranteed by that amendment (those rights, should any of our readers need a refresher are: freedom of religion, freedom of speech, freedom of the press, the right peaceably to assemble, and the right to petition the government for a redress of grievances).

It is not only the first of the ten amendments that comprise the Bill of Rights that is suffering from ignorance; the final (Tenth) fares poorly, as well. According to the results of the survey, only 20 percent of those who participated in the poll could recall the reservation of the rights of the states and the people that is safeguarded by the Tenth Amendment.

The bleak picture painted by the discouraging results brought to light in the respondents' answers to the questions of the Bill of Rights Institute's poll is likely the accumulative effect of decades of institutional disregard on the part of our nation's schools for our Republic's founding documents and the principles of self-government and republicanism upon which they are built.

Why should constitutionalists be concerned by the results of this recent survey? Perhaps a clue is found in the warning written by James Madison in a letter to W.T. Barry in 1822:

A popular Government, without popular information, or the means of acquiring it, is but a Prologue to a Farce or a Tragedy; or, perhaps both. Knowledge will forever govern ignorance: And a people who mean to be their own Governors, must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives.

Further, tyranny is the ultimate outcome of generation after generation of citizens uninformed as to the source and scope of their natural rights and the expression of those rights in our founding charters. James Madison again, as quoted on the Bill of Rights Institute's website:

Since the general civilization of mankind, I believe there are more instances of the abridgement of freedom of the people by gradual and silent encroachments of those in power, than by violent and sudden usurpations.