

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA PRE-

LESSON 01 SESSION 01

FOREWORD

Our Constitution is the foundation upon which this Republic rests. It is now the oldest written constitution functioning in the world and is quite generally conceded the wisest plan of government ever conceived.

Under its beneficent influence we began to solve problems and secure individual comforts and privileges that had baffled philosophers and statesmen for ages. We have harmonized into a splendid and loyal citizenship people of many nationalities coming to our shores with varying ambitions and ideals and have made orderly progress unparalleled in history until we have become the leading nation of the world.

In studying the Constitution, it is essential to have clearly in mind what portions have been modified or supplanted by amendment and what portions have become obsolete. The changes are clearly indicated in this edition.

When the Constitution was written, our country was in a condition of bankruptcy, chaos, and anarchy. Within three years after its adoption, a most favorable condition for orderly progress had been established. That beneficent transformation wrought by the Constitution is one of the most amazing facts in all history.

The men who wrote the Constitution had great mental acumen, political understanding, and moral courage. Their lives had been devoted largely to study and thought concerning government and to rendering public service. They were politically minded in the sense that Edison and Marconi were electrically minded; that Lindbergh and Chamberlain were aviation minded; that Socrates and Emerson were philosophically minded; that Newton and Kepler were scientifically minded.

To regard the Constitution merely as a statement of principles and an enumeration of rights and guarantees results in confusion and a false concept. It is a statement of the purposes of government and the statement of a plan for setting up and administering a federal representative government in harmony with the purposes to which it was dedicated.

Every proper activity of government can be classified under one or more of the six great purposes set forth in the Preamble.

The plan for the division of powers into legislative, executive, and judicial departments, combining proper independence, with the means for helpful cooperation between those departments under well-balanced restraints, makes possible a scientific administration of government.

The Constitution is very much the kind of a plan for handling the problems of government that the alphabet is for handling the problems of language; that the scale is for handling the problems of music; that the ten digits are for handling the problems of arithmetic.

Notwithstanding the vital importance of the Constitution to the well-being of this Republic, the number of persons who know much about it is tragically small. Increasing knowledge of its meaning and value will bring increasing desire for better understanding.