

## Chapter 4 - Tyranny is Tyranny

## Chapter 5 - A Kind of Revolution

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Chapters 4 and 5 cover the same ground so they are reviewed together.  
Quotes from this phony history book are in red.

### Zinn's Vast Conspiracy - He made it all up!

**P. 59** - "Around 1776, certain important people in the English colonies made a discovery that would prove enormously useful for the next two hundred years. They found that by creating a nation, a symbol, a legal unity called the United States, they could take over lands, profits, and political power from favorites of the British Empire. In the process, they could hold back a number of potential rebellions and create a consensus of popular support for the rule of a new, privileged leadership.

When you look at the American Revolution this way, it was a work of genius, and the Founding Fathers deserve the awed tribute they have received over the centuries. They created the most effective system of national control devised in modern times, and showed future generations of leaders the advantages of combining paternalism with command."

**P. 89** - ". . . the establishment of supremacy for the rich and powerful in the new nation-all this was already settled in the colonies by the time of the Revolution. With the English out of the way, it could now be put on paper, solidified, regularized, made legitimate, by the Constitution of the United States, drafted at a convention of Revolutionary leaders in Philadelphia."

**p. 96** - "The problem of democracy in the post-Revolutionary society was not, however, the Constitutional limitations on voting. It lay deeper, beyond the Constitution, in the division of society into rich and poor. For if some people had great wealth and great influence; if they had the land, the money, the newspapers, the church, the educational system - how could voting, however broad, cut into such power? There was still another problem: wasn't it the nature of representative government, even when most broadly based, to be conservative, to prevent tumultuous change?"

**p 97** - "When economic interest is seen behind the political clauses of the Constitution, then the document becomes not simply the work of wise men trying to establish a decent and orderly society, but the work of certain groups trying to maintain their privileges, while giving just enough rights and liberties to enough of the people to ensure popular support."

**Comment:** Talk about a Vast Conspiracy! Of all the lies in Zinn's book, this is the biggest lie of all and there are so many ways to prove Zinn wrong. This is Zinn's conspiracy, not the Founding Fathers! Here are some truths ignored by Zinn:

1) The fact Zinn wasn't arrested and put in jail for writing such a slanderous book is proof in itself that he is clueless. Zinn expressed admiration for Communist China under Mao. Fact is, if Zinn lived in China and had written such a slanderous book about China, Zinn would have been sent to a slave labor camp and never heard from again. It's amazing how people like Zinn show such contempt and hatred for America - **but they won't leave the country and renounce their citizenship!**

2) A number of people wanted George Washington to be a King after the Revolutionary War, but Washington rejected the idea, replying: "With a mixture of great surprise and astonishment, I have read with attention the sentiments you have submitted to my perusal. Be assured sir, no occurrence in the course of the War, has given me more painful sensations than your information of there being such ideas existing in the Army as you have expressed, and I must view with abhorrence, and reprehend with severity."(a) Washington later ran for president, a uniquely American institution at a time when kings ruled most of the world. All part of Zinn's Vast Conspiracy of course.

Source: a: The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript, Volume 24, pub 1938, p 272

3) This whole Vast Conspiracy by Zinn is ridiculous if you look at it another way. Why would the "elites" of colonial American even want to separate from England? The "elites" already had what they wanted. Why attempt something as crazy as a rebellion against the most powerful nation in the world of that day? The "elites" simply had to keep the anger - but not too much anger - of the lower class people directed against the British crown while the "elites" continued to get rich.



4) There is much historical evidence of what was discussed at the Constitutional Convention. The Founding Fathers were prolific writers. No where was there any discussion of Zinn's Vast Conspiracy. ZINN MADE IT ALL UP!!

Zinn's Vast Conspiracy was not discussed by the Founding Fathers at the Constitutional Convention or elsewhere. **ZINN MADE IT ALL UP!!**

- 5) Many of the signers of the declaration of Independence were wealthy men but went broke during the Revolutionary War. Other believers in the revolution played important financial roles. For instance, Haym Salomon (1740 – 1785) was a Polish-born Jewish American businessman who immigrated to New York during the American Revolution. He was possibly the prime financier of Washington's Continental Army. He didn't demand a position of power after the war. He remained a private citizen and died in poverty. More of Zinn's Vast Conspiracy down the drain.
- 6) People of great wealth did not control all the land. The U.S. government did not reserve land for the rich people of the day. The history of the U.S. government was to sell land to whoever wanted to buy it. Just one example was the Northwest Ordinance of 1787, encompassing the future states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and part of Minnesota. This landmark legislation provided for the orderly expansion of the nation and selling of Western lands. The Ordinance was drawn up by a committee headed by Thomas Jefferson. The Ordinance provided that 640 acre parcels be auctioned to the public at the minimum bidding price of one dollar per acre. However, it became apparent that \$640 was more than many could afford and future legislation reduced the minimum acreage requirement so lower income people could purchase farms. The vast majority of land, in colonial times and current times, is owned by average Americans.
- 7) The "elites" did NOT control education in early America. Most education was religious at private schools. Public schools didn't start until later in the 1800s. Once the government got involved in public education, it became much easier to teach children what the government wanted - not necessarily what parents wanted.
- 8) Neither the US government nor the 'elites' have ever controlled churches in America. The Catholic Church is controlled by Cardinals and Bishops, appointed by the Pope. The Bishops appoint the priests to each Parish. In many Protestant Churches, prospective pastors are 'auditioned' and the congregation then votes on who they want.
- 9) The elites did not control all the wealth. This can only happen in a controlled economy such as socialism/communism - which Zinn admires. Capitalism allowed millions of Americans - including many recent immigrants - to start businesses and many grew into large businesses. A significant number of America's presidents, as well as Congressional Representatives and Senators were born into poor or middle class families and had no political connections. It is also important to recognize that the rich class is constantly changing. Some rich people lose their wealth while others become wealthy. If the Founders meant to ensure that the rich of the 1780s stayed rich, the Founders failed miserably.
- 10) The 'elites' did NOT control the newspapers. Newspapers were privately owned and there is a history in America of private citizens printing up pamphlets on every conceivable issue and handing them out.
- 11) The Founders established the Rule of Law, in accordance with the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. The Rule of Law means no one is above the law. Police, politicians, business tycoons, celebrities are subject to the same laws as everyone else. This is a utopian concept and America has failed on occasions. Yet all things considered, America has done very well at applying this concept. To understand a society run by the Rule of Men, examine the history of Mexico from its independence in 1821 to the present.
- 12) The Founders insured freedom of speech and freedom of the press was protected in the first amendment to the Bill of Rights. Anyone can print up anything they want and distribute it. Zinn again proves himself wrong as he relates the many newsletters and pamphlets printed up over the past 200 years espousing ideas of every conceivable political persuasion. So why would the 'elites' put all these freedoms into law if their goal was to maintain control over people? The first thing any dictator does is take control of the media.
- 13) The second thing any dictator does is to disarm the people - after first taking control of the media. The Founding Fathers recognized the importance of the right of private citizens to own firearms - the second amendment to the Bill of Rights.
- 14) Voting in free elections, where you cast your ballot in private. In communist countries, if they allow you to vote, voting is not in secret - meaning if you vote for the wrong person - you're in deep trouble.
- 15) Over 76 million people have come to America since 1790. Why didn't they go to Mexico, or the Soviet Union or Communist China? Hmmm
- 16) ANYONE can run for political office. All you need to do is get a certain number of signatures on a petition available at your local court house. Many incumbent politicians have lost in primary challenges.
- 17) You don't need to belong to a political party in order to get a job, start a business, get a loan, etc. This is done in Communist Countries - like China - which Zinn admires.



Alexis De Tocqueville

18) The Founding Fathers were the most intelligent group of men to ever assemble together in one place and gave the world a document that has been the blueprint for the constitutions of other nations around the world.

19) Contrary to Zinn's diatribes against America, Frenchman Alexis De Tocqueville, who toured America in 1831 - 1832 had a much more accurate description of America. He came to the U.S. to try and understand why the American Revolution produced such a great country while the French Revolution of the late 1790s turned into a bloodbath. He wrote *Democracy in America* that should be required reading for all college students. Here are some things De Tocqueville said about America:

\* "The Revolution of the United States was the result of a nature and reflecting preference of freedom, and not of a vague or ill-defined craving for independence. It contracted no alliance with the turbulent passions of anarchy; but its course was marked, on the contrary, by a love of order and law. It was never assumed in the United States, that the citizen of a free country has a right to do whatever he pleases; on the contrary, more social obligations were there imposed upon him than anywhere else. No idea was ever entertained of attacking the principle or contesting the rights of society; but the exercise of its authority was divided, in order that the office might be powerful and officer insignificant, and that the community should be at once regulated and free."

\* "In America, there are but few wealthy persons; nearly all Americans have to take a profession. Now, every profession requires an apprenticeship. ...At fifteen, they enter upon their calling, and thus their education generally ends at the age when ours begins. Whatever is done afterwards is with a view to some special and lucrative object; . . . and the only branch of it which is attended to is such as admits of an immediate practical application."

\* "In some countries, a power exists which, though it is in a degree foreign to the social body, directs it, and forces it to pursue a certain track. In others, the ruling force is divided, being partly within and partly without the ranks of the people. But nothing of the kind is to be seen in the United States; there society governs itself for itself." . . . The people reign in the American political world as the Deity does in the universe."

\* "Nothing is more striking to a European traveller in the United states than the absence of what we term the government."

\* "The conditions of men are more equal in Christian countries at the present day than they have been at any previous time, or in any part of the world; so that the magnitude of what already has been done prevents us from foreseeing what is yet to be accomplished."

**Zinn quotes a long list of anarchists and communists in condemning America but nothing in this entire book on one of the most important books on America's early history, *Democracy in America*, by Alexis De Tocqueville.**

Compare the results of the American revolution with virtually every other revolution in history. In America, one group overthrew another in order to promote freedom for all, and just as importantly, was able to maintain this freedom. The leaders of the American revolution sacrificed their all for the revolution to succeed. In no other nation in history, did a group of men so selflessly sacrifice everything for the greater good than did the Founders of our Republic.

In other revolutions, one group overthrew another and then imposed their own brand of tyranny on the loser and the rest of the population - all the while proclaiming they were "For The People." Just a few examples of this type of tyranny would be the Communist revolution of 1917 in Russia, the Communist takeover of China by evil Mao Tse Tung in 1949, The Communist takeover of North Vietnam under dictator Ho chi Minh in 1954, Communist Fidel Castro in Cuba in 1959, Saddam Hussein in Iraq, the Iranian revolution in 1979, the takeover in Cambodia by the Khmer Rouge in 1975 that resulted in one million people being exterminated. In other revolutions, a civil war resulted. The French revolution of the 1790s, an attempt to duplicate the American Revolution, turned into a bloodbath. Mexico was another country that attempted to duplicate the American Revolution. But after Mexico defeated Spain to gain their independence in 1821, the country was wracked by dozens of civil wars and revolutions that lasted well into the 20th century.

The American Constitution accomplished goals that had proven impossible for earlier generations anywhere in the world to figure out. Lord Acton of England, who once said, "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely," would say of the writers of the American Constitution, "They had solved with astonishing ease and unduplicated success two problems which had heretofore baffled the capacity of the most enlightened nations. They had contrived a system of federal government which prodigiously increased national power and yet respected local liberties and authorities, and they had founded it on a principle of equality without surrendering the securities of property or freedom." Never in any society had the importance of the individual been so firmly established and given such a priority.

There is no guarantee that America will be a nice place to live in 50 years. There is no guarantee that America will be a free country in 50 years. It is seldom realized that citizens in a free society must be more educated, thoughtful and moral than in a dictatorship. In a dictatorship, people don't need to think, just blindly follow. A free country requires voters that are educated and moral enough to vote good people into office.

### The Sedition Act of 1798

**p100** - The First Amendment of the Bill of Rights shows that quality of interest hiding behind innocence. Passed in 1791 by Congress, it provided that "Congress shall make no law . . . abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press. . ." Yet, seven years after the First Amendment became part of the Constitution, Congress passed a law very clearly abridging the freedom of Speech.

"This was the Sedition Act of 1798, passed under John Adams's administration, at a time when Irishmen and Frenchmen in the United States were looked on as dangerous revolutionaries because of the recent French Revolution and the Irish rebellions. The Sedition Act made it a crime to say or write anything "false, scandalous and malicious" against the government, Congress, or the President, with intent to defame them, bring them into disrepute, or excite popular hatreds against them."

"This act seemed to directly violate the First Amendment. Yet, it was enforced. Ten Americans were put in prison for utterances against the government, and every member of the Supreme Court in 1798-1800, sitting as an appellate judge, held it constitutional."

**Comment:** In 1794, President Washington negotiated a treaty with England to settle outstanding differences between the two countries. The resulting improvement in American-British relations angered the revolutionary French leaders, who were enemies of the English.

In the election of 1796, Federalist John Adams won the most electoral votes to become president. Republican Thomas Jefferson came in second, which made him vice-president. (The 12th Amendment later changed this election method, requiring each party to have their own president and vice-presidential ticket.) Shortly after becoming president, Adams sent diplomats to France to smooth over the bad feelings. Negotiations with France failed and they threatened war on the U.S. There were numerous battles between U.S. and French warships. President Adams proposed war preparations and a land tax to pay for them. Rumors of a French invasion and enemy spies frightened many Americans. One of the results of this fear was the Sedition Act of 1798.

This bill was a misguided attempt to stop false statements being made against the government and to stifle what would today be called "hate speech".

Proof if this is in Section 3 of the bill, which said: "*That if any person shall be prosecuted under this act for the writing or publishing any libel aforesaid, it shall be lawful for the defendant, upon the trial of the cause, to give in evidence in his defence, the truth of the matter contained in the publication charged as a libel.*" So if you could prove what you said was true, you had a valid defense.

Section 4 of the bill stated that it would automatically expire after three years - on March 3, 1801.

Although this bill was not intended to stifle legitimate free speech, it quickly became apparent to Thomas Jefferson, James Madison and others that this legislation did just that. As a result, Madison and Jefferson helped the Virginia and Kentucky legislatures pass resolutions declaring this federal law invalid within these states. Increasing ridicule of the Sedition Act helped Jefferson defeat incumbent President Adams in the 1800 elections. Jefferson then pardoned those still serving sentences under the Sedition Act.

After Jefferson left the Presidency, he stated: "But the only security of all, is in a free press. The force of public opinion cannot be resisted, when permitted freely to be expressed. The agitation it produces must be submitted to. It is necessary, to keep the waters pure."(A)



For ten people to be fined or imprisoned in a country of 5,308,483 people (1800 census) shows it was seldom enforced. One of the people jailed under the Sedition Act was Congressman Matthew Lyon. Lyon represented Vermont in Congress from 1797 to 1801. He was jailed for 4 months but was re-elected to Congress while in jail.

The Sedition Act was never appealed to the Supreme Court. Judicial Review was not established until *Marbury v. Madison* in 1803.

It's ironic that a country run by a dictator Zinn admires - Mao Tse Tung - put literally MILLIONS of people in prison with MILLIONS being executed. But Zinn ignores this, preferring to criticize the fledgling democracy of the U.S. for putting 10 people in prison for a short amount of time.

More of Zinn's Vast Conspiracy theory goes down the drain.

A. Jefferson and the Press, by Frank Luther Mott, Louisiana State University Press, Baton Rouge, 1943

**p 100** - "There was a legal basis for this (common law seditious libel), one known to legal experts, but not to the ordinary American, who would read the First Amendment and feel confident that he or she was protected in the exercise of free speech. That basis has been explained by historian Leonard Levy. Levy points out that it was generally understood (not in the population, but in higher circles) that, despite the First Amendment, the British common law of "seditious libel" still ruled in America. This meant that while the government could not exercise "prior restraint" - that is, prevent an utterance or publication in advance-it could legally punish the speaker or writer afterward. Thus, Congress has a convenient legal basis for the laws it has enacted since that time, making certain kinds of speech a crime. And, since punishment after the fact is an excellent deterrent to the exercise of free expression, the claim of "no prior restraint" itself is destroyed. This leaves the First Amendment much less than the stone wall of protection it seems at first glance."

**Comment** - Another one sided argument by Zinn. In 1960, Leonard W. Levy (1923 – 2006) published *Legacy of Suppression: Freedom of Speech and Press in Early American History*, in which he argued that the original intention of the First Amendment's free-press clauses, was more restrictive than the views held by James Madison and Thomas Jefferson—and, in particular, that the law of freedom of the press did not do away with the English common-law crime of seditious libel. Levy's book was severely criticized by historians.

In 1985, Levy published *Emergence of a Free Press*, which substantially revised *Legacy of Suppression*. While Levy stubbornly maintained that his earlier views on seditious libel was correct, Levy admitted that his central thesis - that the early press in America was intimidated - was not true. Levy admitted that a robust press thrived. Levy also admitted that noted Federalists James Wilson and Alexander Hamilton generally denied the very possibility of national legislation regulating the press.

It must also be noted that if common law seditious libel was understood to be in effect in early America, there would have been no need for President Adams to unwisely pass the Sedition Act of 1798. It is a fact that in colonial America, anyone could print up newspapers, flyers, etc., and distribute them without having to buy some type of licence from the government - which is how the press was controlled in other countries.

Also, not ALL free speech is protected. It is against the law to shout "fire" in a crowded movie theater or threaten physical harm on another person.

Naturally, Zinn only uses information from Levy's first book by a historian whose objectivity is very suspect.

### **Charles Beard's Economic Interpretation of the Constitution**

**p. 90,91** - Another view of the Constitution was put forward early in the twentieth century by the historian Charles Beard (arousing anger and indignation, including a denunciatory editorial in the *New York Times*). He wrote in his book *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution*:

Inasmuch as the primary object of a government, beyond the mere repression of physical violence, is the making of the rules which determine the property relations of members of society, the dominant classes whose rights are thus to be determined must perforce obtain from the government such rules as are consonant with the larger interests necessary to the continuance of their economic processes, or they must themselves control the organs of government.

In short, Beard said, the rich must, in their own interest, either control the government directly or control the laws by which government operates.

Thus, Beard found that most of the makers of the Constitution had some direct economic interest in establishing a strong federal government: the manufacturers needed protective tariffs; the moneylenders wanted to stop the use of paper money to pay off debts; the land speculators wanted protection as they invaded Indian lands; slaveowners needed federal security against slave revolts and runaways; bondholders wanted a government able to raise money by nationwide taxation, to pay off those bonds.

He wanted to make it clear that he did not think the Constitution was written merely to benefit the Founding Fathers personally, although one could not ignore the \$150,000 fortune of Benjamin Franklin, the connections of Alexander Hamilton to wealthy interests through his father-in-law and brother-in-law, the great slave plantations of James Madison, the enormous landholdings of George Washington. Rather, it was to benefit the groups the Founders represented, the "economic interests they understood and felt in concrete, definite form through their own personal experience."



Charles A. Beard

Not everyone at the Philadelphia Convention fitted Beard's scheme. Elbridge Gerry of Massachusetts was a holder of landed property, and yet he opposed the ratification of the Constitution. Similarly, Luther Martin of Maryland, whose ancestors had obtained large tracts of land in New Jersey, opposed ratification. But, with a few exceptions, Beard found a strong connection between wealth and support of the Constitution.

Photo of Charles Beard is from:

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/people/history/historians-us-biographies/charles-austin-beard>

**Comment:** *An Economic Interpretation of the Constitution of the United States* was a 1913 book by Charles Beard of Columbia University. Beard claimed that the Founding Fathers were merely rich men designing a system to exploit the common people and keep them in control. Beard's book was most influential and many historians accepted his views though others considered it propaganda - which Beard helped to foster.

In the Preface, Beard stated:

"The following pages are frankly fragmentary. They are designed to suggest new lines of historical research rather than to treat the subject in an exhaustive fashion. This apology is not intended as an anticipation of the criticism of reviewers, but as a confession of fact. No one can appreciate more fully than I do how much of the work here outlined remains to be done. The records of the Treasury Department at Washington, now used for the first time in connection with a study of the formation of the Constitution, furnish a field for many years research, to say nothing of the other records, printed and unprinted, which throw light upon the economic conditions of the United States between 1783-1787."

"If it be asked why such a fragmentary study is printed now, rather than held for the final word, my explanation is brief. I am unable to give more than an occasional period to uninterrupted studies, and I cannot expect, therefore, to complete within a reasonable time the survey which I have made here. Accordingly, I print it in the hope that a few of this generation of historical scholars may be encouraged to turn away from barren "political" history to a study of the real economic forces which condition great movements in politics."

It's strange how a book that was admittedly incomplete could have come to be accepted by so many as authoritative. Obviously, the thesis preceded the evidence. Belief in socialism was on the rise and there was an audience ready to believe. Beard hurriedly filled that void while gaining money and fame.

It wasn't until the 1950s that historical researchers took Beard up on his request to complete an exhaustive investigation in to this subject. In 1956, "*Charles Beard and the Constitution*" by Robert E. Brown was published and showed that Beard's assertions were wrong. According to Brown, Beard's argument fails from too much reliance on secondary sources, eliminated evidence that did not fit his thesis, and came to conclusions which were not supported by his own evidence. Brown argued that Beard did NOT have sufficient evidence to support any of his assertions!

Brown noted that Beard cannot turn to the Constitution itself to support his thesis; no economic class is empowered by the Constitution, no property qualifications are imposed for the right to vote or hold office - the states determined voting requirements, and titles of nobility are explicitly prohibited. **If the Founders were solely motivated by self-interest, they did a poor job of ensuring their dominance over society.**

**Two years later, the definitive book on the subject, *We The People* by Forrest McDonald completely destroyed Beard's assertions using Beard's own methodology.**

McDonald wrote a book which had the factual evidence that Beard claimed he didn't have time to uncover. After McDonald spent three years in research, he had all the evidence he needed to invalidate Beard's thesis.

A few examples:

Concerning the Pennsylvania vote on the Constitution, McDonald shows that the financial information used by Beard is wrong.(p 172) The truth is, "the delegates on the two sides held about the same amounts of the same kinds of property and they were engaged in similar occupations."(p 181) "If the differences in the property holdings of the members are of any significance whatever, they tend to indicate that the exact opposite of Beard's thesis is more nearly the truth than the thesis itself."(p 182)

Concerning the Massachusetts vote, the state was still reeling from the effects of Shay's rebellion against high taxes levied on farmers by the state government. The rebellion was crushed in Feb. 1787 but in the following election, candidates sympathetic to Shay captured control of the state legislature. Five of the new members had actually borne arms against the state in the insurrection.(p 182) McDonald notes "In the ratifying convention, as in much of the postwar history of Massachusetts, conflicts between economic classes were of at least superficial influence.(p 185) McDonald concluded that "a large number of delegates who could expect to derive economic gain from the adoption of the Constitution voted against ratification. A large number favored ratification on philosophical or political grounds, and an even larger number opposed it on similar grounds."(p 189) Massachusetts eventually voted 187 to 168 to ratify the Constitution.

Concerning the New Hampshire vote, McDonald states the "Study of the economic backgrounds of the personnel of the ratifying convention leads to the conclusion that economic considerations could have had little weight in determining the decision of most members of the convention."(p 246)

Concerning the Virginia vote, McDonald concludes, ". . .the property holdings of ratificationists and anti-ratificationists were virtually identical except that more small farmers from the interior supported ratification than opposed it."(p 268)

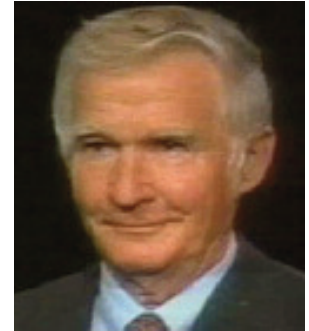
Concerning the votes in Delaware, New Jersey and Georgia, which unanimously ratified the Constitution, Beard claimed ". . .that ratification was pushed through by personal interest groups before agrarian and paper-money groups could organize their forces. The opposite is true. In each of these three states agrarian interests dominated the conventions.(p 351)

McDonald states, "On all counts, then, Beard's thesis is entirely incompatible with the facts. Beard's essential error was in attempting to formulate a single set of generalizations that would apply to all the states."(p 357)

McDonald concludes: "Chapter eight above, and the earlier chapters of which it is a summary, demonstrated the inadequacy of Beard's interpretation. The facts did not substantiate his assumptions; the details were found to be incompatible with the broad outlines he sketched. Beard asked the wrong questions, questions which, in the way they were phrased, were meaningless."(p 400)

The first edition of Zinn's *A People's History of the United States* came out in 1980 - over 20 years after the books by Robert Brown and Forrest McDonald had destroyed all of Charles Beard's assertions. Typical of Zinn, neither of these books are mentioned in Zinn's propaganda book.

**In 1968, a third book was published that demolished Beard's arguments, but from a different angle. Bernard Bailyn's *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* convincingly showed the sincerity of the beliefs in liberty our Founding Fathers held.** This Pulitzer Prize-winning book is considered one of the most influential studies of the American Revolution published during the 20th century. Bernard Bailyn (b 1922) has been a professor at Harvard since 1953, specializing in American colonial and revolutionary-era history. Known for his meticulous research, he is the author of over a dozen books and has received many awards. Bernard is the father of astrophysicist Charles Bailyn, who has published over 100 papers and received many awards.



Forrest McDonald  
<http://www.booknotes.org/Watch/55945-1/Forrest+McDonald.aspx>

In *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, Professor Bailyn relates the great discussions of the Revolutionary generation on how to create a powerful government yet prevent it from becoming a tyrannical government. The Founders recognized the need for power to maintain liberty but also understood how dangerous power is when it goes beyond legitimate boundaries. Professor Bailyn explores the Founders' beliefs in Chapter III: Power and Liberty: A Theory of Politics, which starts off with a quote from James Madison:



Bernard Bailyn  
<http://heymancenter.org/people/bernard-bailyn/>

*"In Europe, charters of liberty have been granted by power. America has set the example and France has followed it, of charters of power granted by liberty. This revolution in the practice of the world may, with an honest praise, be pronounced the most triumphant epoch of its history and the most consoling presage of its happiness" - James Madison, 1792 (p 55)*

***"The theory of politics that emerges from the political literature of the pre-Revolutionary years rests on the belief that what lay behind every political scene, the ultimate explanation of every political controversy, was the disposition of power. The acuteness of the colonists' sense of this problem is, for the twentieth-century reader, one of the most striking things to be found in this eighteenth-century literature; it serves to link the Revolutionary generation to our own in the most intimate way."*** (p 55)

*"Most commonly the discussion of power centered on its essential characteristic of aggressiveness; its endlessly propulsive tendency to expand itself beyond legitimate boundaries. . . All sorts of metaphors, similes, and analogies were used to express this view of power. The image most commonly used was that of the act of trespassing. Power, it was said over and over again, has "an encroaching nature"; ". . . if at first it meets with no control [it] creeps by degrees and quick subdues the whole."* (p 56)

*"What gave transcendent importance to the aggressiveness of power was the fact that its natural prey, its necessary victim, was liberty, or law, or right."* (p 57)

*"For as great a blessing as government is," the Rev. Peter Whitney explained, "like other blessings, it may become a scourge, a curse, and severe punishment to a people." What made it so, what turned power into a malignant force, was not its own nature so much as the nature of man - his susceptibility to corruption and his lust for self-aggrandizement."* (p 59)

*"More interesting than these venerable despotisms, bywords for the rule of force unrestrained by countervailing influences, were a number of despotic states that had within living memory been free and whose enslavement, being recent, had been directly observed. Venice was one: it had once, not so long ago, been a republic, but now it was governed 'by one of the worst of despotisms.' Sweden was another; the colonists themselves could remember when the Swedish people had enjoyed liberty to the full; but now, in the 1760s, they were known to 'rejoice at being subject to the caprice and arbitrary power of a tyrant, and kiss their chains.'"*(p 64,65)

*"A constitution of government, analogously, Adams wrote, is 'a frame, a scheme, a system, a combination of powers for a certain end, namely, - the good of the whole community.'"*(p 68)

Professor Bailyn then spends 28 pages summarizing all the different ideas among the Revolutionary generation on how to create 'the wisest and happiest government that human wisdom can contrive.' First, in studying previous governments and ultimately moving to create a completely new form of government. Some excerpts:

*"Nowhere in eighteenth-century America had the legal attributes of nobility been recognized or perpetuated. The law made no provision for hereditary privileges; no office of government had been guaranteed by birth."* (p 275)

*"Democratical" governments have rarely succeeded, for the mass of the people have only rarely had the power of self-denial, the disdain of riches, of luxury, and of dominance over others necessary to sustain such governments."*(p 292)

*"To make "places of power" a prerogative of birth was poor policy indeed, for "wisdom is not a birthright"; nor was life tenure in office advisable since "men's abilities and manners may change."*(p 295)



*“Constitutional thought, concentrating on the pressing need to create republican governments that would survive, tended to draw away from the effort to refine further the ancient, traditional systems, and to move toward a fresh, direct comprehension of political reality. Denied, by the urgency of new problems, the satisfactions of elaborating familiar abstractions, Americans edged toward that hard, clear realism in political thought that would reach fulfillment a decade later in the formation of the national government and achieve its classic expression in *The Federalist*. In the process the modern American doctrine of the separation of functioning powers would be created, and the concept of “democracy” transformed.”(p 301)*

**p. 101** - “Still, the mythology around the Founding Fathers persists. To say, as one historian (Bernard Bailyn) has done recently, that “the destruction of privilege and the creation of a political system that demanded of its leaders the responsible and humane use of power were their highest aspirations” is to ignore what really happened in the America of these Founding Fathers.

Bailyn says:

Everyone knew the basic prescription for a wise and just government. It was so to balance the contending powers in society that no one power could overwhelm the others and, unchecked, destroy the liberties that belonged to all. The problem was how to arrange the institutions of government so that this balance could be achieved.

Were the Founding Fathers wise and just men trying to achieve a good balance? In fact, they did not want a balance, except one which kept things as they were, a balance among the dominant forces at that time. They certainly did not want an equal balance between slaves and masters, propertyless and property holders, Indians and white.

**Comment:** The first quote used by Zinn about “the destruction of privilege. . .” is from another book by Professor Bailyn - *Faces of Revolution: Personalities & Themes in the Struggle for American Independence*, published in 1990. Zinn is contesting the conclusions of the most authoritative researcher on the Revolutionary War period. This book by professor Bailyn also proves Zinn’s conclusions are baseless. Here is the complete quote and some additional excerpts from *Faces of Revolution*:

*“The Founding Fathers were mortals, not gods; they could not overcome their own limitations and the complexities of life that kept them from realizing their ideals. But the destruction of privilege and the creation of a political system that demanded of its leaders the responsible and humane use of power were their highest aspirations. To note that the struggle to achieve these goals is still part of our lives - that it is indeed the very essence of the politics of our time - is only to say that the American Revolution, a unique product of the eighteenth century, is still in process.” (page 224)*

*“The dominant belief struck at the heart of the privileged world. Everywhere in America the principle prevailed that in a free community the **purpose of institutions is to liberate people, not to confine them**, and to give them the substance and the spirit to stand firm before the forces that would restrict them. To see in the Founders’ failure to destroy chattel slavery the opposite belief, or some self-delusive hypocrisy that somehow condemns as false the liberal character of the Revolution - to see in the Declaration of Independence a statement of principles that was meant to apply only to whites and that was ignored even by its author in its application to slavery, and to believe that the purpose of the Constitution was to sustain aristocracy and perpetuate black bondage - is, I believe, **to fundamentally misread the history of the time.**” (p 221)*

*“**All of the Founders hoped to create a free society in America; not all of them could, or would, recognize, as Jefferson did, that this could only end in the destruction of chattel slavery. And those who recognized this and who strove to break the hold of this vicious institution so long before its condemnation became a common moral stance acted within a system of priorities that limited what they could achieve.**” (p 223)*

*“The highest priority was reserved for whatever tended to guarantee the survival of the republican nation itself, **for in its continuing existence lay all hopes for the future.** Most of the Revolutionary leaders hated slavery - not one of them ever publicly praised it - but they valued the preservation of the Union more. **A successful and liberty-loving republic might someday destroy the slavery that it had been obliged to tolerate at the start; a weak and fragmented nation would never be able to do so.**” (p 223)*

*“It was not simply that new liberty-protecting forms of government were being devised. **A new civilization, it was felt, a civilization whose origins could now be seen to have lain in the earliest years of settlement, was being created, free from the weight of the past, free from the corruption and inflexibility of the tangled old-regime whose toils had so encumbered Americans in the late colonial period.**” (p 214)*

***“The first is the belief that power is evil, a necessity perhaps but an evil necessity; that it is infinitely corrupting; and that it must be controlled, limited, restricted in every way compatible with a minimum of civil order. Written constitutions; the separation of powers; bills of rights; limitations on executives, on legislatures, and courts; restrictions on the right to coerce and to wage war - all express the profound distrust of power that lies at the ideological heart of the American Revolution and that has remained a permanent legacy.”*** (p 220)

The second quote about **“Everyone knew the basic prescription for a wise and just government. . .”** is from *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, discussed earlier. Here is the complete quote and an additional quote from this book that shows, once again, that Zinn is wrong on his beliefs about the Founding Fathers and the U.S. Constitution:

*“You and I, my dear friend,” John Adams wrote in 1776, “have been sent into life at a time when the greatest lawgivers of antiquity would have wished to live. How few of the human race have ever enjoyed an opportunity of making an election of government . . . When! before the present epocha, had three millions of people full power and a fair opportunity to form and establish the wisest and happiest government that human wisdom can contrive?” But how fair in fact was the opportunity? Everyone knew the basic prescription for a wise and just government. It was so to balance the contending powers in society that no one power could overwhelm the others and, unchecked, destroy the liberties that belonged to all. The problem was how to arrange the institutions of government so that this balance could be achieved.*(p 273)

*“The American war is over; but this is far from being the case with the American revolution. On the contrary, nothing but the first act of the great drama is closed. It remains yet to establish and perfect our new forms of government, and to prepare the principles, morals, and manners of our citizens for these forms of government after they are established and brought to perfection.”* (Benjamin Rush in 1787. p 230)

**Both of Professor Bailyn’s books show conclusively that Zinn’s views on the Founding Fathers and the Constitution is wrong.** Both of Professor Bailyn’s books should be required reading for High School and College students. Actually, the judiciary and every member of Congress should read these books. **Professor Bailyn is a REAL historian. Zinn is a complete fraud.**

**p. 91 - Four groups, Beard noted, were not represented in the Constitutional Convention: slaves, indentured servants, women, men without property. And so the Constitution did not reflect the interests of those groups.**

**Comment:** Just because someone of a particular group wasn’t physically present does NOT mean they were not represented. Zinn, like all divisive activists, divides society into factions, each wanting something special for themselves. The purpose of the Constitutional Convention was to establish a country where the Rule of Law gave everyone the same rights, possibilities and responsibilities. These rules, then, benefited everyone, so they were represented, except of course slaves.

**Slavery** - Slavery was not an American invention and was in existence for several thousand years before America became a nation. It was common all over the world at the time. Africans, American Indians, Muslims and a host of other cultures openly traded and owned slaves. **We need to remember that there never was an anti-slavery movement until white Christians - Englishmen and Americans - created one.** Prior to the creation of the Abolitionist Movement in the U.S. and Britain, slavery was considered “normal.” The critical importance of our founding document is that it gave a moral legal basis to the eventual eradication of slavery, not only in America but around the world.

To condemn the Founding Fathers for having tolerated a society that allowed slavery was to expect far more than was possible at that time period. Had the Founders insisted on the eradication of slavery at the Constitutional Convention, it would have failed and slavery would have lasted far longer than it did. It is significant that even the Founders who profited from slavery condemned it and set in motion the forces that would ultimately destroy it. While the Founders were idealistic, they were also practical and hoped that human progress would continue to advance under our enlightened Constitution. They hoped that social action by Christians would eventually make slavery morally reprehensible in all of America and around the world. This is one of many ways America shaped the world for the better.

America banned slavery in the Northwest Territory in 1787. Congress abolished the importation of slaves into the US in 1807. Great Britain also banned the African slave trade in 1807, but the trade of African slaves to Brazil and Cuba continued until the 1860s.

**Indentured servants** - Indentured servitude was a labor system whereby young people - typically poor youth from Britain and the German states - paid for their passage to the New World by working for an employer for a certain number of years once they arrived in America. Both servant and employer were legally obligated to meet the terms, usually enforced by local courts. As the Constitution set up the Rule of Law in America, any issues facing indentured servants were addressed at the Convention, so they were represented. Most indentured servants came to the New World before 1787.

**Women** - Women in colonial America had more rights than other women had in probably all other countries of the world at the time. To compare conditions today with conditions over 200 years is not valid. Zinn refuses to recognize that the adoption of the Constitution was the vehicle for so much social progress in the following two centuries. Yet as brilliant and far reaching as the Constitution was, the Founders could not get ahead of the prevailing social beliefs that currently existed. Zinn's attitude is ignorant. It's like demanding a first grader get 100% in a college level physics exam. You can only accomplish so many things at one time. You start at the beginning and move forward step by step.

**Men without property** - The Constitution did not prohibit people from buying property, so they were represented at the Convention.

**p 102** - "As many as half the people were not even considered by the Founding Fathers as among Bailyn's 'contending powers' in society. They were not mentioned in the Declaration of Independence, they were absent in the Constitution, they were invisible in the new political democracy. They were the women of early America."

**Comment** - Zinn refers to women as one of Professor Bailyn's 'contending powers' on page 101. **Zinn was so closed minded he didn't even know that Professor Bailyn was talking about the balance of power between the Executive, Judicial and Legislative branches of the U.S. government.**

To say that women 'were invisible' in the new democracy is simply not true. Here is a list of some famous women:

**Abigail Adams** - An early advocate for women's rights, she was a vital confidant and advisor to her husband John Adams, the nation's second president. She opposed slavery and supported women's education. Like other women, Abigail had no formal education, but she availed herself of the family's library to master subjects most women never considered. She also joined her mother in tending to the poor and sick. From their earliest married days, the couple began an extensive correspondence, which provides insight into the social and political climate of the Revolutionary and Early National periods in American history. In 1776, as her husband participated in the First Continental Congress in Philadelphia, Adams wrote her most famous letter that the Founding Fathers "remember the ladies."

Source: <https://www.nwhm.org/education-resources/biography/biographies/abigail-smith-adams/>

**Sybil Ludington** - At the age of 16, she rode all night to alert the local militia of an impending invasion by the British Army at Danbury, Connecticut. She rode more than twice the distance of Paul Revere - 40 miles.

**Lydia Darragh** - lived in Philadelphia and spied on the British when they occupied the town.

**Elizabeth Burgin** - brought food to American prisoners of war held on ships in New York Harbor and helped 200 prisoners to escape. The enraged British offered a two hundred pound reward for her capture - an amount equal to twenty years of pay for a British soldier. Burgin narrowly escaped being captured and fled New York. In 1781, the Continental Congress awarded Burgin with a pension for her significant role in the Revolutionary War.

Source: <https://www.nwhm.org/education-resources/biography/biographies/elizabeth-burgin/>

**Mercy Otis Warren** - She was a writer and the first woman playwright. During the years before the American Revolution, Warren published poems and plays that attacked royal authority in Massachusetts and urged colonists to resist British infringements on colonial rights and liberties. During the debate over the United States Constitution in 1788, she issued a pamphlet, Observations on the new Constitution, and on the Federal and State Conventions written under the pseudonym "A Columbian Patriot," that opposed ratification of the document and advocated the inclusion of a Bill of Rights. In 1805, she published one of the earliest histories of the American Revolution, a three-volume History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution, the first history of the American Revolution authored by a woman.

**Catherine Moore Barry** - Known as the "Heroine of the Battle of Cowpens", Kate was instrumental in rounding up militia as the British approached Cowpens. The Battle of Cowpens took place on January 17, 1781 and was a decisive victory for the Continental army.

Molly Pitcher - was born Mary Ludwig in 1754, near Trenton, New Jersey. During the American Revolutionary War's Battle of Monmouth, she carried pitchers of water to soldiers, thereby earning her nickname. After her husband collapsed during the battle, she took over the operation of his cannon.