

the MEL GABLERS'
Educational Research Analysts
Newsletter

Inside:
Documented
Unprofessionalism

Providers of Textbook Info • PO Box 7518 • Longview, TX 75607-7518 • 903/753-5993 • fax 903/753-7788 • Info@TextbookReviews.org • Nov. 2002

Worse than before

CITIZENS 249 EDUCATION ESTABLISHMENT O

IN 2002, for the first time in 11 years, publishers submitted high school U.S. History books for Texas approval ... and again the education establishment missed most factual errors. In 1991, we found 231 undetected factual errors in *six* high school U.S. History books after the state approval process certified them error-free. When this year's process ended, we found 249 still-uncorrected factual errors in *four* books — *more mistakes overlooked in fewer texts*. This despite publishers' claims to have beefed up their fact-checking, despite Texas Education Agency emphasis on verifying accuracy to the State Textbook Review Panel, and despite an \$80,000 Texas Tech review team backing them up.

"... Nixon ... became the first American president ever to visit the Soviet Union."

— *The American Republic Since 1877* (Glencoe, 2003), p. 837, col. 1, par. 1, lines 6-8

wrong president

Nixon was not the first American president to visit the USSR. FDR went to Yalta in 1945. The text itself admits this on p. 655, col. 2, par. 1, lines 1-3.

No one claims we call ideological differences "factual errors." These 249 are all the "2 + 2 = 5" type of mistakes that both Jesse Jackson and Jesse Helms would agree are wrong. From publishers' lists of editorial changes, it is plain that they often use mostly proofreaders, not real academicians, to troubleshoot. Of course they market textbooks on the basis of teaching aids, not subject matter content. The Texas Education Commissioner's Report on Correction of Factual Errors combined the findings of the State Textbook Review Panel, and the \$80,000 Texas Tech textbook review team. In all the high school U.S. History books, this Report recommended a grand total of four changes. Pitiful.

Almost certainly the respective 8th Grade companion volumes of these four high school U.S. History books contain a like number of undiscovered factual errors. In the 100+ total texts in this K-12 Social Studies submission, the factual errors yet outstanding must run into the thousands. What if this industry flew our airplanes or made our prescription drugs? Hopefully this is the only time Texas ever adopts textbooks for all Social Studies courses in the same year. Competent review of one upper-level textbook takes 6-8 weeks of quality time. Better to do a little well, than a lot poorly. We should return to staggered adoption of different grade levels of Social Studies books in different years.

"The Dred Scott case was only the second one in American history in which the Supreme Court reversed a federal legislative act."

— *The Americans: Reconstruction to the 21st Century* (McDougal, 2003), p. 162, bottom right margin, "Background"

wrong description

The 1857 Dred Scott decision did not reverse the Missouri Compromise, because the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act had *already repealed it*.

Our full individual reviews of these four high school U.S. History books are unique in that the same person read each text and judged them by the same standard review criteria. This helps evaluate them uniformly and rank them objectively. **Use our lists of factual errors, missed in the state process, to validate the credibility of our reviews.** All these textbooks are over 800 pages long, two over 900. Busy classroom teachers cannot possibly read them before adopting one. Nor do even large school districts have enough market leverage alone, to force publishers to make corrections. That is why bids to scrap Texas' state textbook approval process, or to restrict citizen input into it, are insanity.