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A New Government: Can it work?

The year is 2050. You are an American astronaut who just returned to earth from the planet Mars. You have been on Mars since July of 2046. While you were on Mars a very unusual thing happened. In January of 2049, your communications with earth suddenly stopped. No matter how hard you tried, you could not contact anyone on earth. In July of 2049, you were able to contact the American headquarters on the moon. They reported that they were having the same difficulty with their communications with earth. During November and December your radio station on Mars started picking up short news broadcasts from earth. The broadcasts described a violent revolution in the United States which had overthrown the existing government and replaced it with a new government. On January 7, 2050, a group of seven American astronauts, including yourself, boarded their space craft and headed for the earth. On January 10, your space craft landed at Los Angeles International Airport.

When you stepped out of your space craft, you were immediately met by 12 police officers and taken to an underground room where one of the police officers described the present situation in the United States.

“Gentlemen, last September the government of the United States was overthrown by leaders from each of the fifty-one states. The states started the revolution because they felt that the federal government had too much power. The central government which exists today is quite different. In just one minute I will give each of you a copy of the new constitution for you to examine. Become familiar with these new laws because you have to live by them. Each of you no longer is employed by the federal government. You will have to find new jobs starting tomorrow. After you have read over the new constitution you will remain in this room until 12:00 noon tomorrow. We will supply you with food and a place to sleep until that time. Are there any questions?”

Everyone is in such a state of shock that there is only silence. Each of you is given a copy of the new constitution. The police leave your group alone in the room. Here is a summary of the power which the central government now has under the new constitution.

Article I

The central government shall consist of a Congress having two to seven representatives from each of the 51 states (Puerto Rico became a state in 2048). Each state, regardless of size, shall only have one vote in Congress. A 2/3 vote (34 states) will be needed to approve any legislation. A unanimous vote of all states will be required to change this constitution.

Article II

The representatives to the Congress will be paid by their own states and will vote as instructed by their own state governments.

Article III

The laws approved by the Congress will be enforced by the state governments. There will be no executive branch of the central government to enforce laws approved by Congress (i.e. there is no president).

Article IV

The Congress will NOT have the power to settle legal disputes between states. The state courts will have the power to settle legal disputes between the states. (i.e. there is no US Supreme Court or federal courts).

Article V

The states, not Congress, will have the power to regulate trade agreements with foreign countries and trade between the states.

Article VI

Congress has the power to print money in the form of gold and silver coins, but must ask the states for gold and silver. If Congress cannot obtain enough gold and silver to supply each state with adequate printed coins, then each state shall have the power to print its own money.

Article VII

Congress shall have the power to declare war, but must ask the states for men to fill the ranks of the armed forces.

Article VIII

Congress shall have the power to tax the citizens, but the states shall be the only one with the power to collect taxes.

Now that you have read the new constitution, you must apply it to the United States and see how it affects the whole country. Using the information in the new constitution, address how the following situations below might lead to conflict between the states or problems for the national government. Be sure to use hypothetical examples as a part of your description of the problems that may arise.

- 1) Trade with foreign countries.
- 2) Trade between the states.
- 3) Raising and maintaining the armed forces to defend the country against foreign invasion.
- 4) Obtaining adequate funds to finance the operation of the central government.
- 5) Settling legal disputes between two or more states where various laws on the same topic are contradictory.
- 6) The printing and usage of money.