

## Blast From the Past: Compton's on the Constitution

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One last excerpt from my childhood encyclopedias. As the reader will have noticed, these encyclopedias did not contain the most refined, exhaustive treatment of many subjects. It is odd to me that the entry for "Refrigeration Systems" is the same length as that for "The Reformation" but there it is. Still, every once in awhile you come across an entry that still would enjoy scholarly consensus but which seems not to have penetrated the consciousness of those you would assume would be most concerned. I would like all the of Tea Party activists, and especially Mr. Glenn Beck, to stop invoking the U.S. Constitution long enough to turn to page 139 of Volume 23 of the 1970 Compton's Encyclopedias. There they will find this opening:

"United States Constitution. Most people think of the United States as a young country. Yet it has the oldest written constitution among the important nations of the world.

"The 3 million people of the United States had no sooner won the Revolutionary War than various groups among them became discontented with the Articles of Confederation. The government under the Confederation seemed too weak to keep the people in order at home or to make the little republic respected abroad. One great difficulty was that Congress lacked sufficient power to raise money ? it could only make requests of the states. It was always poor, while generous states such as New York and Pennsylvania complained that they paid more than their due share. Another difficulty was that Congress had no authority to regulate commerce. When some of the states began laying tariffs and other burdens on the shipping trade of their neighbors, it caused heavy losses."

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