

"Democracy is the most demanding of all forms of government in terms of energy, imagination and public spirit required of the the individual." George C. Marshall

Campaign for an Informed Citizenry Concept

THE NEED: There are significant concerns being raised on all levels of the economic and political spectrum these days, concerns on national and international fronts which, although certainly integrated into conservative, liberal and alternative political views, involve all three. Said another way, the United States is facing problems which may well speak to a blend of all the political considerations embodied in the political and economic constructs existing across the world. In essence, this places a demand on our public of understanding principles tied to, among other things, the concepts of capitalism, democracy, socialism and communism. This of course means that the American public should have a clear understanding of these concepts in order to sort through and analyze each view, especially in the sense of what each is promoting in terms of the collective public good. It is the CIC's position that there remains a lack of critical analysis related to our American experiment as well as a lack of corresponding ideological dialogue. In short, this has created a civic information/education 'depression' in the country, which, particularly given the significant issues on the table, may indeed be the most drastic of our public concerns.

OUR UNDERSTANDING OF THE NEED : It is not hard to identify that this 'depression' exists, especially in that we can simply ask our fellow countrymen (and perhaps ourselves), either in an academic or general discussion setting, what they (we) in fact know about things like our own "capitalist identity" as well as the integration of it in terms of related political and economic concepts like socialism and communism. Aside from the anxiety (and even fear) that commonly results from mentioning things like capitalism or communism, the often relayed responses tied to not wanting to discuss politics, not caring about politics, or feeling that its simply too confusing, are more than enough evidence of our situation. Moreover, the limited research on what Americans might actually know in terms of the political principles tied to our two- party system, let alone to other ideological frames, again speaks to this concern.

That being said, it might be better asked, what this situation actually points to? In other words, in terms of both our national and international concerns, how can it be expected that we have a legitimate grasp of current issues and future options when this 'lack' exists? In terms of our national concerns like unemployment, the housing crisis, income disparities, crime, taxation and government responsibility, if our citizenry is unable to measure these problems against legitimate frames of analysis, then little could be expected in terms of addressing them. Relative to our international concerns, imagine

trying to comprehend and/or compare what those in Europe, the Middle East or China are doing if we don't understand the political and economic structures under which they live. And how can it possible for us to examine and justify our foreign (and military) strategies without this understanding? (On this same point, consider that this lack of understanding can also lead to all types of political chicanery – where politicians simply pander to public emotion, create half-truths and lies and do or say anything to garner a vote. Certainly, the sense of this happening would simply make trusting the political processes and our government, and even the import of the vote, all that more difficult.)

PLANNING TO ADDRESS THIS NEED : Over the last quarter century, and particularly following the publishing of his last book based on his own personal experiences, James Palombo has been discussing these matters in both academic and public settings across the world. His recommendation that we develop a more comprehensive frame within our secondary, post-secondary and adult education arenas from which people can better understand and discuss economic, political and social America, simply makes sense. This is particularly so in recognizing that we proceeded similarly with the integration of technological advancement. Said another way, if we've done this within the context of technological skills, why not with citizenship skills?

It is from this point that the CIC intends to proceed. We would like to create a more extensive possibility by which Mr. Palombo can continue to discuss this “creation of understanding and dialogue” as a viable option for public consideration. In this sense, we are organizing a grass-roots, non-partisan, education based, university tour (20-25 universities), beginning in September of 2011 and running throughout the academic year. This tour, which will coincide with the political energy put forth in terms of the 2012 presidential campaigns, will allow Mr. Palombo and the CIC the opportunity to relay the thoughts embodied in his book to create the energy and interests by which action can ensue. From the discussions, it is also intended that research projects could be developed among the universities, projects that can connect the university-student populations to considerations that would have national and international implications. (This could be tied to programs like the Cuban Project where, under the umbrella of ideological understanding, students are brought together to discuss the elements tied to capitalism and socialism.) In conjunction with the discussions and research potential, there would be radio and tv spots and other public presentations integrated in each locale, further spreading the thoughts for consideration. In short, this tour process would be bringing the notion of developing “clear ideological understanding” to the American table.

WHAT YOU CAN DO : As you might suspect, the tour will demand contacts, networking and money. In this sense, we are hoping to attach to significant university, media, public and private contacts, as well as to funding that can match our small but important budget considerations. It is in any one of these areas where you can be of help

in making our effort reach its potential, so we hope to hear from you accordingly.

Clearly, the mandate remains in front of us all - the “chatter” that we most often hear today, the lack of civic energy that exists, and the overall seriousness of the day demand our efforts - our concerns will not/cannot be addressed otherwise. In essence, this is something we cannot avoid undertaking – which also means pushing our leadership, irrespective of party affiliation, accordingly.

"Today, when the consequences of our action (and inaction) reach further into time and space than at any previous point in history, we more than ever need politically engaged citizens." Jakob von Uexkull