

Q & A: Election Thoughts From Fred Rotondaro

Michael Sean Winters | Nov. 11, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

Fred Rotondaro is the Chairman of [Catholics in Alliance for the Common Good](#) [1], a progressive Catholic organization begun after the 2004 elections which played a vocal, and critical, part in the effort to get universal health insurance passed earlier this year.

As part of our on-going look at the election results, we asked Rotondaro for his thoughts.

Fred Rotondaro: Conservatives, moderates and progressives should have all learned the same lesson on Nov 2nd. American public policy is not decided in one election. It's an ongoing process-- a brawl if you will that takes place over many elections, many decades.

A second underlying theme is that the major issues are often symptoms and not underlying causes of what needs to be changed in the nation. America has deep problems today and they do relate to jobs, the deficit, and politicians' disconnect from the average American. But the causes go back three decades and more. And dealing with one problem will often complicate solving a different problem.

Some examples: the jobs issue was certainly heightened by the financial breakdown. But it also goes back to the 1980s and 1990s. Back to outsourcing and technology and the decline of union power. And it's related also to the fact that many new global jobs are "knowledge based" and require technical skills. But America now ranks in the mid 20s among all nations in math and science for graduating high school seniors. And we rank 12th in proportionate number of college grads. We were first not long ago. And how does this rank affect the deficit crisis? What will be cut and how will those cuts affect our future ability to compete.

Another major problem is that the American social contract of the past has been broken. In many ways, we are no longer one country but several. The level of inequality is greater than any time since 1928. 1 in 5 children live in poverty; some 50 million Americans did not have enough food at one time or another last year; middle class median income went down 8 per cent this decade.

But look at some other Americans. The top 1 percent took home 23.5 percent of all American earnings last year and 95 percent of all increased earnings from 1980 to 2005. That's right, 95 percent of all increased earnings went to 1 percent of Americans

Commentators have noted the almost complete lack of debate about our two ongoing wars. Is this because these wars are being fought by the sons and daughters of the lower economic classes?

This growing and dangerous inequality comes from many causes including financial and business deregulation, a tax system that dramatically cut the concept of progressive taxation, a lack of government support to help the middle class much less lower income Americans.

American problems are complex and interrelated. They relate in many ways to the fact that we no longer make the common good as a national priority. Those of us who do believe in a common good theory of government

should be ready for a fight over the long haul --for incremental victories.

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[1] <http://www.catholicsinalliance.org/>