

# THE CHANGE AGENDA IS NOT YET COMPLETE

Robert Reich



## ROBERT REICH

is an American politician, academic, writer, political commentator, and Professor of Public Policy at the Goldman School of Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley. He served as the 22nd United States Secretary of Labor under President Clinton from 1993 to 1997. He authored the intellectual bestseller *Supercapitalism: The Transformation of Business, Democracy, and Everyday Life* (2007).

*RJ* Dear Mr. Reich, in your opinion, what will be the main focus of the 2012 US election campaign? Will it see a new agenda that differs from President Obama's 2008 call for 'change'?

I would expect Obama to focus on the changes that he has managed to bring about to date, and in effect highlight that America is changing in ways that are improving the lives of Americans. I don't expect the slogans to be much different,

but I do expect them to place greater emphasis on tangible accomplishments.

*RJ* Do you think that the issue of economic government intervention will be one of the major issues in the 2012 presidential campaign?

Republicans will try to make 'Big Government' the main issue, as they always do. Democrats will emphasize that Wall Street and big business have been tamed, and that Americans are better off now that they have moved towards a system of universal health care and that the economy has turned a corner. They will however stress that there is still much left to be done. **Obama's agenda of change is not yet complete.**

*RJ* On the whole, do you expect the political agenda to lean more to the left or to the right in 2012?

I suspect that **the political agenda will remain rooted in the center**, as most political agendas tend to be. The real question is where the center will be. If the state of the economy has improved considerably and unemployment has dropped substantially by 2012, most Americans will feel good about

*RJ* What issues — political, economic or cultural — should a presidential candidate who you would support place emphasis upon?

In America, **the economy and employment** are always the most important issues if unemployment levels are high. However, if the economy is doing reasonably well and most people are no longer worried that they might lose their jobs, another issue might become the most important, such as **immigration or the environment**. If there is a terrorist attack in the United States, national security will become the number one issue.

*RJ* What are the major social transformations that have taken place in your country in recent years?

The biggest and most important social change occurred as a result of the deep recession — many Americans lost their jobs, savings, and even their homes. This was deeply traumatic for many. And providing the backdrop for this, of course, is widening inequality of wages, income and opportunity. Nevertheless, the nation has also become far more racially and ethnically diverse, and

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the economic situation. If not, the Republicans will emphasize the national debt and deficit, and suggest that the current administration's 'big spending' is responsible.

women are continuing to attain more positions of high responsibility. ■

*Robert Reich was speaking with Nikita Kurkin and Julia Netesova*