



TRANSCRIPT

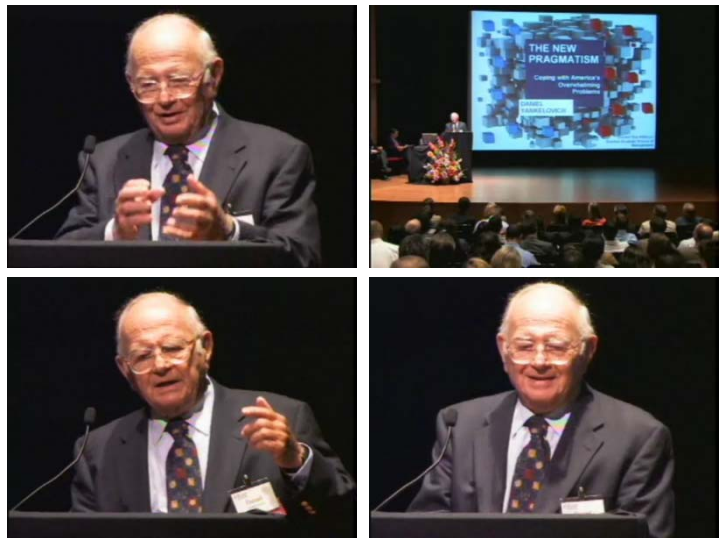
Public Agenda Chairman Daniel Yankelovich addresses the 2008 Annual Drucker Day celebrating founder Peter Drucker's centennial year.

In his presentation, Yankelovich pinpoints the social, political and ideological barriers that stand in the way of solving the country's major problems, including what he calls "the growth of self-isolating communities" and "technological hubris." He outlines a strategy for pursuing "The New Pragmatism" – an approach aimed at overcoming political gridlock and advancing public understanding of issues like energy, education reform and immigration – and presents a new tool called "The Learning Curve" to accelerate public dialogue on divisive issues.

November 8, 2008
The Drucker School of Management
Claremont University

Daniel Yankelovich
Chairman, Public Agenda
The New Pragmatism

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Ira Jackson, Dean, Drucker School: At this time, I don't think we could be more blessed to have Daniel Yankelovich to help provide some perspective, and some insight, and some vision for where we go from here.

Daniel Yankelovich is cut from the same cloth as Peter Drucker. Like Peter, he has spent a lifetime thinking, and a lifetime doing, creating and observing, analyzing and advocating. He's started companies, and introduced new ideas like the *New York Times/Yankelovich Poll*, now the *New York Times/CBS Poll*. He's started important non-profits like Public Agenda, which he now chairs. He cut his teeth in business. He paid his dues in the classroom at NYU, as Peter did, at Harvard, at UCSD.

He's written about our major institutions, and the human condition, and the need for more active citizenship in eleven powerful books, including the *Magic of Dialogue* and *Profit with Honor: The Next Stage of Market Capitalism*. Daniel Yankelovich, like Peter, is a public intellectual and a national treasure. He's the father of public opinion research. He's been a steward of great institutions like the Carnegie Foundation, the Kettering Foundation, Brown University, and great companies like CBS and Loral.

He has a lot to say, and like Peter, a great deal of wisdom to convey. We're proud to have him as our Drucker Day Centennial Kickoff keynote speaker: Daniel Yankelovich.

Daniel Yankelovich: I want to just say a word about how Peter and I met. It must be 35 years ago. We were on a tour boat together. And we were the entertainment on the tour boat. We sang for our supper. He and I gave lectures on the tour boat, and we had the tour for free. On the first day out on the boat, he asked me what I did. I, of course, knew his work, and I said to him, "Well, Peter, what I do is mainly scrounge up data to support the kinds of bold problem solving that you go in for." We teamed up that way.

CHART 1. (see full PowerPoint presentation) Today, in honor of Peter, I'd like to 'do a Drucker,' - - to show some data and material in support of the kinds of problem solving he went in for.

The problem is exemplified by poll data preceding the election that showed that more than 85 percent of the American public feels that our society is on the wrong track. That is an impressive and unprecedented number. It was, of course, reflected in the outcome of the election.

I asked myself the question, "How might Peter approach that kind of challenge, and what would be some of the supporting data for it?"

Let me now turn to a presentation that focuses on how we might get the country back onto the right track following this seminal election.

CHART 2. Our society is confronted with many severe and overwhelming problems: a major financial crisis that's international in scope; a staggering national debt that is swelling as the nation ages; global warming that's made worse by the policies of the United States and those of the largest country on earth, China; an unprecedented transfer of oil wealth to nations hostile to our interests; a severe loss of standing in the world; a poorly understood and dangerous conflict with the Muslim world, and the rising costs of healthcare and education that threaten the unwritten social contract that lies at the heart of the American democracy.

CHART 3. Now, to maintain perspective, we've overcome equal or greater threats in the past. In my own lifetime, I've lived through the crash of 1929 and the Depression; World War II; the McCarthy period; the Cold War; the Cuban missile crisis; the assassinations of John Kennedy and Martin Luther King; the Vietnam War and 9-11. So this is not the first time, even in the lifetime of a single individual, that the country has lurched from one major problem and crisis to another, and somehow managed to prosper.

CHART 4. Our problems are solvable. We have extraordinary resources: human, capital, corporate, technological, and scientific. We have the potential to restore world leadership status and a long tradition of pragmatic problem solving. BUT, -- and there is a big but -- our nation's problem solving gift seems to have eroded, and eroded badly.

CHART 5. We see many symptoms of this erosion in our survey data. We see massive denial, people grasping at straws, ideology instead of practicality, leadership pandering, polarization instead of cooperation, growing public mistrust that is mounting year by year, and what the French called

OUR NATION'S PROBLEM-SOLVING GIFT HAS ERODED BADLY



Symptoms:

- Massive denial
- Grasping at straws
- Ideology instead of practicality
- Leadership pandering
- Polarization instead of cooperation
- Growing public mistrust/ "ressentiment"

'*ressentiment*.' This is a technical term from political science signifying a particular kind of political resentment. Political scientists feel that it is probably the second most important political emotion. The first is political instability, but second only to instability is this growing *ressentiment* that really corrodes societies.

CHART 6. What I find extraordinary and important is that the reasons for the erosion are mainly cultural. This reality makes them difficult to deal with. Some of these cultural forces are familiar. There is, and has been for the last 30 or 40 years, a very sharp expert/public gap, an elite point of view that doesn't take the public seriously, and a public that mistrusts elites.

There is also severe political polarization that is emotional and passionate because it is caused by culture wars over core values. We saw that in the California election, Proposition 8, prohibiting gay marriage. The culture wars are unfortunately alive and well, exacerbating the polarization in the society.

CHART 7. I want to call attention to some of the cultural reasons for the erosion that are perhaps less familiar than these. One is the public demand for a stronger voice in decision-making, but without any sense that a stronger public voice involves some responsibility. It's almost as if as long as you have a passionate conviction, that makes your point of view correct. And of course when peoples' passionate convictions collide, then you have polarization and often bad decisions.

The public demanding a stronger voice would ordinarily be an asset in a democracy. This demand derives from the cultural revolution of the '60s and '70s and has strengthened over this past 30 or 40 years. But if people are unwilling to take responsibility for their strong opinions, and are impulsive and opinionated instead of thoughtful and responsible, then a stronger public voice is in fact a drag on our democracy, an invitation to pandering.

Another new cultural factor that interests me enormously is a new form of 'technological hubris' that I believe led to some of the worst Wall Street abuses of this financial crisis.

Let me read you a quote from the front page of the *New York Times*. It's from a fellow named Joe Cassano, who was the head of the Financial Products Division of AIG in London, the division that dealt with credit default swaps. Cassano said, "It is hard for us to even see a scenario within any realm of reason that would see us losing one dollar in any of our transactions." We are now one hundred and fifty billion dollars later (first the government had to put in \$85 billion, and since then it's added to another \$65 billion to the AIG bailout). Cassano was counting on AIG's risk models that implied that AIG was hedged for risks all over the place and in every conceivable way.

When people try to explain what happened, they fall back on the "black swan" excuse, the idea that this is one-in-a-hundred-year accident.

The fellow who developed these models for AIG, a Professor of Finance at Yale named Gary Gorton was recently written up in the *Wall Street Journal*. Gorton said that AIG confined his model to only one form of risk, and excluded others. He also said that his model was based totally on past history. The example he gave of past history was that in the past credit agencies never downgraded bonds.

If you take into account that his model left out major risk variables, and is based exclusively on the past, it's not a rare black swan. The probabilities of failure are closer to the order of magnitude of 40 percent, not one-hundredth-of-



one-percent. So you have this naiveté and hubris about technology eliminating risk, and management taking on faith the idea that if the mathematical wizards are doing it, it has to be valid.

This example happens to be a very telling one, but you could multiply it over and over again. There's always been that kind of naïve infatuation with technology, and it really is responsible for a lot of the problems in the financial crisis that we're facing today.

Another unfamiliar cultural cause of the erosion is the growth of self-isolating communities, as reported in a recent book by Bill Bishop called *The Big Sort*. In the book he points out that not only do people self-select the media that agree with their own views, leading to groupthink, but they also self-select the communities where they can find like-minded people. When you have so many forces in the society that strengthen group-think in all these different ways, that becomes a really difficult cultural issue to deal with.

Finally, we have the cultural obstacle of generations unaccustomed to sacrifice and to postponing gratification. You buy what you want when you want it without concern about saving or the future. The Baby Boom generation does not have the scars of my generation, the Depression generation, which is fortunate for them but leaves them unprepared to deal with the current situation.

CHART 8. When you add up all of these cultural causes for the erosion of our problem solving abilities, you are forced to realize that the kinds of solutions that we're most familiar with, and that lie within our comfort zone, won't work on them. We are comfortable throwing money at problems. We're comfortable with legislation and regulation. (These are how we're trying to deal now with the financial crisis.) We're comfortable with technological fixes. We're comfortable applying specialized knowledge. And we are comfortable with media coverage and PR. But all of these familiar strategies that lie within our comfort zone, simply don't work against cultural obstacles.

So, we have an erosion of our problem-solving capability, and we don't have a set of tools for dealing with it. So, now comes the Drucker question. How might Peter have responded to this sort of disconnect between the challenge and the lack of sound methods for coping with it?

CHART 9. It seems to me that he would, in his implacably logical way, come to the conclusion that you have to fight culture with culture. And in practice that means restoring a traditional American philosophy and habit of thought. (One of the communalities of interest that Peter and I shared was an interest in philosophy, and in particular American philosophy). I believe that revitalizing our problem-solving culture of thought can best be done through what I'm calling "the new pragmatism." Restoring our American pragmatic tradition has the potential for dealing with the kinds of cultural obstacles I've been describing.

CHART 10. Pragmatism is a distinctively American philosophy, cited by the historian Henry Commager as America's major contribution to philosophy. In the first decades of the last century, it enormously strengthened our nation's problem-solving capabilities. In its nature, it transcends partisanship and polarization, and focuses on and heightens cooperation. Of particular interest is its recent revival and updating in our universities.

CHART 11. Let me just give you a quick thumbnail sketch of what I mean by the 'new pragmatism.' Pragmatism is a 100-year tradition developed by

POPULAR UNDERSTANDING OF PRAGMATISM IS CORRECT BUT LIMITED

To be 'pragmatic' is to be:

- Practical/action-oriented, rather than theoretical
- Experimental ("try it out and see if it works")
- Open to compromise/incremental solutions/art of the possible
- More concerned with solving concrete problems than with grand visions

four bold American thinkers: Charles Peirce; William James, who gave his 1907 lecture at Berkeley here in California introducing the term pragmatism; John Dewey, who best personifies pragmatism in practice; and the sociologist George Herbert Mead. From 1900 to 1930, under James' and Dewey's influence, pragmatism was key to America's social reforms. After World War II, however, it was brushed aside, particularly in academic philosophy departments, as being outmoded, old-fashioned, and naïve.

Interestingly, around 1980, pragmatism began to be updated and revived in a number of academic disciplines. The American philosopher, Richard Rorty, and the German philosopher, Jurgen Habermas, were major agents of change. Their influence led to a revival of pragmatism not only in philosophy, but also in literature, in ethnic studies, in management studies, and, to some degree, the social sciences. Its vitality in the universities makes it somewhat easier to disseminate because so often ideas and trends start in the universities before moving out into the larger society.

CHART 12. What then is pragmatism? The popular understanding of pragmatism is correct, though limited. Being pragmatic, according to the popular understanding, usually means being practical and action oriented rather than theoretical. It means being experimental, willing to try things out and see if they work.

These days we hear a lot about 'communities of practice.' These are very much in keeping with the

pragmatic spirit. Being pragmatic also means being open to compromise, to incremental solutions, to focus on the art of the possible, and to be more concerned with solving concrete problems than with grand visions.

CHART 13. Now as far as it goes, this popular understanding of pragmatism is correct. But if pragmatism meant nothing more than this, it wouldn't have the potential power to do what we hope it can do. Pragmatism has two other important dimensions. One of them is that it's very strongly value-driven, with a major focus on freedom of thought and action. Among its core values are: the opportunity to develop one's own gifts and capabilities; a trust in the judgment of the public; a spirit of optimism; a faith in hope and cooperation; a strong resistance to all forms of authoritarianism, ideology and fundamentalism, and a strong utopian reformist strain. These values are summed up in the phrase "Democracy as a way of life" that John Dewey used over and over again.

CHART 14. The other dimension of the 'new pragmatism' is its methodological/epistemological side. Pragmatism is committed to social experimentation as a fundamental way of knowing. It also presupposes a constantly evolving and changing society rather than a static culture. It is based on an acceptance of uncertainty and contingency, not absolutes. It has a strong emphasis on context and circumstances. It examines problems from various points of view, and it is based on a radical theory of truth -- the concept of ideas as tools for coping rather than as mirrors of reality.

While I was working on this presentation, and listening to Obama's campaign speeches at the same time, it seemed to me that there was a rather interesting correlation between his outlook and the perspectives of the new pragmatism.

CHART 15. How can the new pragmatism spread beyond the academy? It's not going to happen primarily through government. It's going to occur through entrepreneurship and innovative thinking

at all levels of society: individual, commercial, public, non-profit, private, institutional, and all of these in interlocking, interacting ways. Government is just one part of it. (It seems to me "the path from good to great" that the Drucker School is seeking to navigate, lies precisely along these lines.)

CHART 16. I've developed five examples of pragmatism in action, but in order to leave time for discussion, I'm just going to focus only on the first two of them. The first relates to strategies for reducing our dependency on foreign oil, with two illustrations: the T. Boone Pickens' Plan and the GE/Google Plan.

The second example is a research project with the public that the Public Agenda and Viewpoint Learning -- organizations with which I'm affiliated -- are working to develop. We are seeking to develop a new tool to accelerate what we call the *public's learning curve* on urgent issues.

The other three examples are (1) pragmatic efforts to deal with the housing crisis, (2) charter schools, and (3) corporate efforts to add billions of people to the market economy and go green.

CHART 17. Turning first to our nation's current dependency on oil, let me give you a quick definition of the problem. We now import 70 percent of our oil versus 24 percent in 1970. We consume 25 percent of the world's oil demand, with 4 percent of the world's population. World oil production peaked in 2005, so it's going to be very difficult to add to supply. The United States has only 2 percent of the world's oil reserves, so added supply is not going to come from us. And in Pickens' words, our dependency on foreign oil represents the greatest transfer of wealth in human history, \$700 billion a year to oil producing nations, some of whom are quite hostile to our interests. This transfer of wealth will lead to an inevitable decline of U.S. power influence and leadership in the world. There is no way that you can transfer this kind of wealth -- unprecedented in history -- and maintain a position of world leadership and influence.

CHART 18. Here, very briefly, are the core elements of the Pickens and Google/GE plans. The essence of the Pickens Plan is simply to substitute wind power for natural gas in generating electricity, and then use that natural gas, of which we have an abundance, instead of oil as a transportation fuel.

The Google/GE plan, which is even bolder and more far-reaching, is to make all electricity generation renewable, using wind, solar, geothermal and nuclear fuels, and then to transform the entire automotive fleet to plug-ins.

If you take these two plans together, they are not trivial efforts. They do not nibble at the edge of the problem. They represent serious efforts at solution.


CHART 19. The benefits of the two plans are: they would wean the United States off of fossil fuels, especially oil and coal; cut energy costs; create new industries, and millions of new jobs; improve our national security; reduce the transfer of wealth to other nations, and help reverse global warming. These are bold plans with significant benefits. But the American public isn't ready for them.

CHART 20. So that's how we come to the second example, the new research tool that we are developing, which is called the "Public's Learning Curve." This tool is a way to accelerate the public's learning curve on what we call "time-gap" issues. By time gap issues I mean issues where the normal learning curve --the amount of time it takes for the public to make the changes and sacrifices involved -- is simply too slow given the urgency of the problem. I use the energy problem as one example of a time-gap issue.

CHART 21. The reason the normal public learning curve is likely to be slow on this particular issue is that the problem is so complex. It poses three different threats to our society. It presents an economic threat in the rising price of oil, a national security threat, and a global warming threat, with oil and coal being the major source of carbon emissions. The problem is that these three threats undermine one another: the solution to one of them exacerbates the others others. For example,

PRAGMATISM IN ACTION

Example 5:



LEARNING CURVE

Applied to the ENERGY challenge

Normal public learning curve likely to be too slow:

1. Problem is complex (triple-threat)
 - Economic (rising price of oil)
 - National security (transfer of wealth to hostile nations)
 - Global warming (oil/coal = major source of carbon emissions)
2. Solutions to some threats exacerbate others (e.g. coal)
3. Requires huge changes on part of institutions *and* the public
4. Special interests have an incentive (and means) to retard learning curve (e.g. Exxon's paid experts)

If public learning curve does not advance rapidly, consequences could be disastrous

we have plenty of coal that would reduce our dependence on oil, but would add to the global warming threat.

Countering this triple threat requires huge changes on the part of institutions and the public. But a number of special interests have the incentive and the means to retard the public's learning curve through obfuscation. For example, Exxon pays scientists to take the other side on debates about global warming, so that if you have one scientist who warns us about the reality of global warming, you have an Exxon-paid scientist who says it's an exaggeration. Even though the first speaker may represent 99 percent of the thinking of the scientific community, the debate is presented as even and balanced. And it confuses the hell out of the public because people's reactions to those debates are, "Well, if the experts can't agree, how can you expect us to agree on something so technical?"

On this issue, and on many others, if the public learning curve does not advance rapidly, the consequences could really be disastrous for the country.

CHART 22. What we've learned over the past 50 years in public opinion is that on important issues of this sort, people don't form a judgment as soon as they get a little bit of information. Before they make up their minds, they go through three rather extended stages. The first is consciousness-raising when people become aware of a problem and its urgency. Then comes a stage of "working through" as they struggle with all the conflicting complexities

of the issue. And finally there is a stage of resolution when people make their minds firmly.

The length of time it takes to move through the three stages of the learning curve can vary from months to decades to centuries. Slavery, women's rights -- these sorts of issues took centuries to resolve. So on urgent issues, the need to somehow move expeditiously through the three phases is critical.

CHART 23. We start by measuring the public's current position on the learning curve, which Public Agenda is currently doing. We find that it's moving along the consciousness-raising front reasonably well, and so we see some progress. Incidentally, I think our media do an outstanding job on the consciousness-raising phase of issues. It's when you come to the next phase that you run into difficulties.

CHART 24. What is needed then is to identify the key impediments to help the public climb the learning curve. Those impediments include: wishful thinking and denial; a lack of understanding of the complexity of the problem; a lack of practical choices (it is very important that people have a couple of concrete choices to wrestle with); deliberate obfuscation; a tendency to grasp at straws; a feeling of lack of urgency; the normal resistance to change, and a great deal of mistrust.

CHART 25. These are not small obstacles, so the working through process takes an enormous amount of time and effort. What our research is doing is to accelerate the learning curve experimentally with small cross-sections of the public.

Our California-based research organization, Viewpoint Learning, Inc., does this through very intensive eight-hour dialogues where people engage an issue in depth, and work through and deal with these various obstacles. Then, at the end of those dialogue sessions, we gather insights into where you might lead the public if leadership has the right kind of understanding of how to lead the public to deal with the obstacles the issue presents.

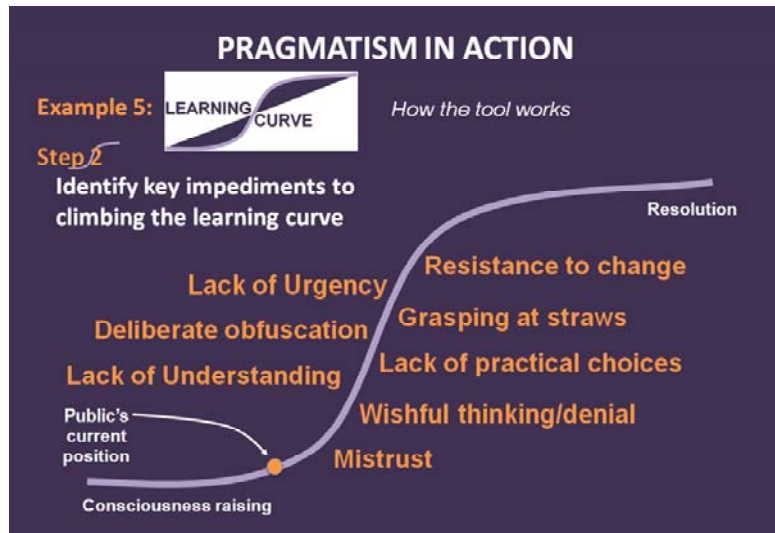


CHART 26. And then it's a matter of connecting with leaders, briefing leaders on how to keep expectations realistic, and how to, baby-step by baby-step, overcome the major obstacles to learning. We identify some constructive ways that leaders can help the public, and other ways they can't help. We also contribute to advancing "explanatory journalism" -- a way of giving people a better understanding of the context of issues.

CHARTS 27, 28, 29. Housing is the next issue I was planning to explore as an example, and I would elaborate it if we had more time. I would also review the charter schools issue, and the example of corporations expanding the world customer base by several billion people and by going green. [Each of these issues is addressed in the Power Point presentation].

CHART 30. There are other time-gap issues, which, like energy, require this learning curve approach. These include healthcare, immigration, the swelling national debt, our loss of international standing and our conflict with the Muslim world.

CHART 31. And so let me draw this presentation to a close with three conclusions. First, it isn't practical to counter the cultural forces eroding our problem-solving abilities one by one. If you go back to Chart 7 that lists of all the cultural impediments, they are formidable. You can't deal with them one at a time, you really need some overall approach.

It seems to me that the new pragmatism, as a way of thinking, as a way of approaching problems, is a powerful way to transcend many negative cultural forces. I believe it provides the common ground we need to revitalize our national gift for problem solving.

Over the past week or so, listening to some newly-elected senators and representatives, I must have heard the word 'pragmatic' 20 or 30 times. This reflects a feeling in the country that it's time to move away from partisanship, from ideology, from magic fix-its. Let's get down to work and start to cooperate and really begin to deal with our problems. So maybe we are, hopefully, at the beginning of new era.

Thank you.

CONCLUSIONS

1. It is not practical to counter the cultural forces eroding our problem-solving abilities one by one
2. The New Pragmatism is a powerful way to transcend many negative cultural forces
3. It provides the common ground we need to revitalize our national gift for problem solving

Q&A

Ira Jackson: Thank you so much, Daniel. Daniel is welcoming questions now. If you could just speak up, and stand when you give your question.

Audience Member: I absolutely love this new pragmatism concept. I have been faced with healthcare problems all my life, and it seems to me that in most situations, people's attentions aren't elevated until they personally experience something. I liken this to smoking. Unless you've been close to someone who's been ill with cancer, you tend to not pay attention, so how do you think pragmatism can raise people's consciousness without experientially getting into some negative situations?

Daniel Yankelovich: Unfortunately, there are all too many people whose attention will not be captured until they have a direct collision with our dysfunctional health care system. I would assume that more than half of this audience has a medical

horror story to report, because we have a medical system where there's a tight correlation between sophisticated medicine and dumb errors. Alas. they go together. This is because sophisticated medicine goes with specialization and with poor oversight. So that's what leads to having surgeons sign your knee before they do the operation [to avoid the mistake of operating on the wrong knee]. What good does it do you if you have the most sophisticated operation on the wrong knee?

When hospitals look at patient satisfaction, they usually ask the wrong questions. (Was your food warm while they were operating on the wrong knee?)

A few years ago, when we surveyed people and asked them, "Aren't you worried about your lack of savings?" They would say, "We *are* saving. Our house represents our savings." But in many cases, it doesn't any more. The need for saving becomes

real to people when they are up against the new reality: when their credit cards are maxed out and they have spent down their home equity loan, may face the threat of unemployment.

Today's economic reality is so harsh that the pump is primed for leadership, the public is ready for change in many fields. Up to now, the leadership has not been there, and special interests have managed to obfuscate the issue, so that we are not getting the kind of change that we need.

Audience Member: In your opening comments, you said several things about the baby boom generation being unaccustomed to sacrifice, which to me appears to be character issues, and so how does this 'new pragmatism' interact with changing character, and not just finding solutions?

Daniel Yankelovich: It's a very good and subtle question. And if it were just a matter of character and personality, it'd be very difficult to do anything about, because you can't change character overnight. But I don't think it's a character issue so much as it is matter of culture. If you look at what happened in the financial community, it was an "everybody is doing it" sort of cultural influence that led to the disaster. The mortgage brokers used the term "grenade mortgages." You don't want to hold them in your hand for more than a few minutes because they will blow up in your face. So they knew they were peddling toxic products to the public, but there was no shame involved with that. Everybody else was doing it. That is culture.

When the head of Citibank left office, he used a vivid phrase to describe the bank's practices. He said, "As long as the music played, we had to dance." This is culture. In our studies of corporate culture, we came to the conclusion that you can take the same young people, and in one company like Enron they'll behave in one way, but if you put them in a company like GE, they'll behave differently. If it were a matter of character, they would act the same way in either company. But that's not the case. It's not always easy to change culture, but it's a whole lot easier to change culture than it is to change character.

Audience Member: I understand that from one point of view. It can be culture. From another point of view, it could be a matter of power and other vested interests. How do you see that?

Daniel Yankelovich: One of the criticisms of John Dewey was that he didn't understand power. One of the reasons the social sciences are a little leery of pragmatism is that they feel that it paints the world the way you'd like to see it, rather than the way the world is. Historically, that has been a legitimate criticism of pragmatic philosophy as exemplified by people like James and Dewey.

If you take a newer approach to pragmatism, I think it transcends the power issue. Take my example having to do with energy. If we transfer 700 billion dollars a year to countries like Saudi Arabia and Iran, they will use their power in ways that are not amenable to our interests. If we can get our act together and achieve some degree of energy independence, we can re-align the balance of power.

To overlook the role of power is to be naïve. But if, instead of drifting the way the country has building up its debt, building up its dependency on oil, and the other problems we've not been able to address, if we use our pragmatic gift for problem solving, we will realign our interests and the power elements in a lot better way than they're currently aligned. I think a pragmatic approach to power is the right approach to it.

Audience Member: I'd like you, please, to talk a bit about the pragmatist answer to the problem of relativism in values. Does the pragmatic theory of truth lead to relativism?

Daniel Yankelovich: One of the accusations against pragmatism is that it leads to relativism in values. But that is not a valid criticism. Remember the chart where I quoted John Dewey's focus on "Democracy as a way of life." What he meant by that is that there is a set of core values underlying pragmatism. There is nothing relative about that set of core values, so I don't think you have a problem with relativism. Some people use the term pragmatic to suggest that you sacrifice your values for practicality. That's part of the popular use of the term. But the philosophy of pragmatism as it has developed in this country by people like Dewey and Rorty do not reflect that kind of relativism.

Let me give you one reference source, Rorty's 1978 book, *Mirror of Nature*. It deals with this issue of relativism, and also the theory of truth, the pragmatic theory of truth to which you referred.

Audience Member: It's very exciting for me to see so many people under the age of 30 come out and vote in this election. It made a difference, but I still see a lot of youth just bogged down in video games and things that have no meaning whatsoever to solving our problems, or even being in the right areas, math and science, and the things that this country is lacking. How would you change this?

Daniel Yankelovich: That's both a specific and a general question. The specific question has to do with voting behavior, and the general question has to do with youth motivation. Let me address the narrower voting question.

The statistics are quite clear about voting behavior. Historically, one out of four 18 to 25 year olds vote, as against seven out of ten 50 to 65 year olds, so that's a stunning ratio. The promise in this election was that the Obama enthusiasm would result in a massive increase in youth turnout. I don't think that happened. I haven't seen the full statistics yet, so I might be wrong. The statistics I've seen analyze voting patterns in terms of 18 to 29 year olds, and there the number is something like 47 percent voting participation. But if you focus on younger people, 18 to 25, those who did turn out voted for Obama by two to one margins, but the turnout was not as dramatically increased as some people expected.

I don't think that there's anything mysterious or discouraging about it. I think that it's very inconvenient for many young people to vote. We have set up a lot of obstacles. Young people aren't used to voting. They have to go to a certain amount of trouble, and often they don't go to that trouble. It doesn't seem to be indifference, but I suspect that a lot of these young people who genuinely cared about the election just didn't vote.

I think that the mechanical obstacles are rather important. Perhaps we should have universal registration, particularly if young people are away in another state in college. There's a lot that could be done, some of which other countries do, but we don't do. There are many practical ways of increasing voting participation that we don't do. I don't think that its slovenliness or indifference or withdrawal. There was a lot of passion in this election; a lot of concern on the part of young people. I worry about a lot of problems. But that's one I don't worry about.

Audience Member: Polling data and its use by the media to inform the public, and perhaps sway the vote. I wish you would say whether perhaps that accelerated the learning curve.

Daniel Yankelovich: The media's conception of the learning curve and our conception of it after studying the way the public learns for a half century, could not be more different. The media's conception is: Learning is a simple transaction – the media gives you information, and you make up your mind once you have received the information. This, of course, is sheer fantasy. The media are in the information business, so maybe they are tempted to over-emphasize the role of information.

What we've learned is that information obviously has a role in influencing the way people make up their minds, but probably the least important role of almost any other influence. What does influence people in making up their minds? Their *values* are of prime importance, their *emotional feelings* about the issue are important, as is the way people reconcile the issue with their values. The way friends and neighbors and people like themselves think is quite important.

Most of the time the public takes what we think of as a "Chinese menu" approach: one from Column A, one from Column B one from Column C. It drives the purists crazy but works quite well. Over 50 years, my respect for the way the public makes up its mind has steadily increased. But the media operate in another universe, without a sound understanding of how public opinion is actually formed.

They do an outstanding job on the first phase of the learning curve. But as soon as they get you all stirred up about one issue, they then lurch onto the next issue, and then to the next. So you're constantly riled up, but few issues are ever fully resolved.

If you look at it from a Drucker-esque point of view, from a management point of view, you see one set of institutions, the media, addressing one part of the learning curve problem, which has to do with consciousness-raising, but a lack of institutions to address the working-through phase. There is in our society a huge vacuum in terms of a management structure to address the most important part of the public learning curve. It's a wonder that people

ever do reach resolution with that kind of uneven input.

Ira Jackson: We'll take one more question.

Audience Member: If you were asked by Barack Obama, what would be your advice for him to get to energy independence, to get the public to a point where that could actually happen in the next ten years?

Daniel Yankelovich: I don't think that we can achieve energy independence in ten years whatever we do. It will require a much longer timeframe regardless of what action we take now. It seems to me that you'd want to analyze the problem and say, "What are the best transitional things we can do in the next ten years, and what comes after that? What are the short terms things we can do, and what are the long term things we can do?"

The long term things, the ones that require a long ten-year lead time, are the things we have to start now. So the problem for Obama is to make sure that we can get through the Congress some of the long-term, non-oil, non-coal alternative energy solutions, and in the ten-year interim get there, through a combination of programs involving conservation, greater reliance on our supplies of natural gas and fuel efficiency.

There's nothing that would work more quickly than conservation, but it isn't a long-term solution. And

there are a few solutions of that sort. I think some aspects of the Pickens' Plan and the GE/Google Plan make a lot of sense. There may also be some developments in solar that can be realized within a ten-year time frame.

There's no silver bullet. There are probably about eight alternative energy strategies that you can piece together to have a whole plan, and some of these should get a lot of attention in the first ten years. They will give us a transition to the following ten years when the problem will really be solved.

In sum, we need both a coherent short-term and long-term strategy with some emphasis on conservation, and ways of using natural gas and wind and solar in the first ten years, and then the really serious stuff in the decade or two following that.

Thank you very much. You've been a great audience.

Ira Jackson: I have the sense, Dan, that you not only captured this crowd, but that if Peter were here, he would have enjoyed your remarks enormously. I almost felt as though we were channeling, or you were channeling Peter, and that he was here.

END

To see Daniel Yankelovich's full Power Point presentation

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