

DO WE HAVE AN AMERICAN?

- An Imaginary Citizenship Interview -

When people become citizens of the United States, they're usually asked a list of questions about "facts" concerning that nation. How would you respond to such inquiries about the USA? In recent years I've been thinking of that. Here are some likely responses –

Q: What is the date of Independence Day?

A: That depends how you define "independence". In many ways, significant parts of the population are not yet independent. The textbook answer is July 4, 1776 – but many Afro-Americans and women did not gain the right to vote (an essential feature of independence) until the 20th century. At times it seems the way many Americans live today is not all that different from the way feudal serfs in Europe lived a thousand years ago. Can those living at the edges of poverty actually be called 'independent'?

Q: Can the Constitution be changed?

A: Oh yes, easily. It happens all the time without people even knowing it. Just create a secret agency that's accountable only to the President, and you are pretty much free to do as you wish.

Q: Name one purpose of the United Nations.

A: Well, it's a good venue for espionage.

Q: Who makes the laws in the United States?

A: The Fortune 500 companies do. Isn't it obvious that money moves the system? The people with the most money have the most power. Politicians are generally puppets. Basically, money is the fuel that moves most transactions.

Q: How many senators are in Congress?

A: 100 senators are for sale. The senate is pretty much like an expensive auction. Lobbyists and special interest groups essentially "buy" senators through various mechanisms. Special interest lobbies essential "own" most politicians. Seems like a

banana republic, doesn't it? If any senator betrays the group that supports them, their chances of re-election are slim.

Q: Name three rights or freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights.

A: Hmm. Since the Patriot Act came was enacted, I've wondered about that. If the government decides someone is a terrorist, I'm afraid their rights are extremely limited.

Q: What is one advantage of being an American?

A: That depends on the social group you belong to. If you're an American Indian, you can look at the people who killed your ancestors and sigh. If you're a US soldier, you can get free overseas travel and earn a modest income for killing. And if you're in the upper 1% income bracket, you already know the answer to this question.

Q: Sorry, Mr. Newfields – don't seem to appreciate this great nation enough.

A: Actually, I'd rather be a world citizen than an American. Our allegiance should be to this planet as a whole – not to any individual nation. If humanity is to avoid annihilation, then more people need to think of this planet as a whole rather and put its welfare above mere tribal-nations.

- T Newfields

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