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## The Last Word: Put the C's Back in Economics

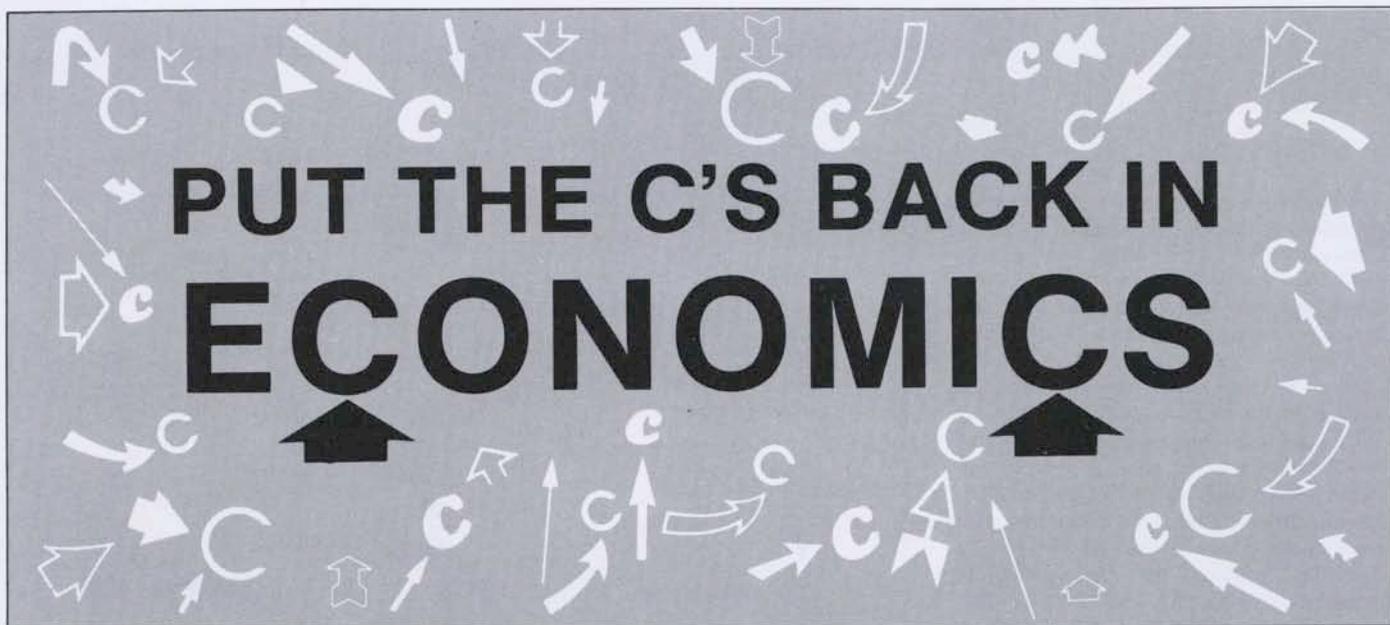
Stanley Antoniotti  
*Bridgewater State College*

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They've taken the C's out of *Economics* and now the word is *Economis*. But perhaps you weren't aware that each letter had a special significance.

The E stands for efficiency: that is what Economists study. The two O's stand for organization through efficiency. The N stands for national, which is one way of looking at the economy while the I stands for individual which is another way. The M stands for market which is the type of economy we have, while the S stands for socialist which is the type we don't have.

But what do the two C's stand for? Before we answer that question, we must determine who are the infamous "They" who've taken the C's out of economics. You've undoubtedly heard your conservative uncle, brother, (yourself?) complaining about "...all those people living better on welfare than I am living on my salary." "Those people" is an acceptable euphemism for non-printable terms referring to certain ethnic groups.

But are the poor really "They"? What about business, which is asking for give-backs and paybacks while unemployment is still high and prices still rising, albeit slowly. We also have the new breed identified by journalistic acronym: the young Urban Professional. The YUPPIE creed seems to be "he who dies with the most toys wins the game." I'm not sure what game they're talking about, but if it's life they're referring to, a family of four making less than \$10,609 a year (the poverty line) might find it difficult to join in.

Then there is the present Republican administration which has not only punched holes in but would like to totally dismantle

the social safety net. Poverty and hunger are on the increase in the U.S. for the first time in years.

At the same time the Administration is attempting to inflict a tax increase on the middle class in the guise of tax reform. This must be done to reduce the deficit, which has grown at record proportions to support the President's military spending spree. The Credo is 'guns not butter.'

These are "They."

Now we can answer our question. The two C's stand for Care and Compassion, two virtues which our government freely displays to benefit Africa or the American farmer, but which are rarely directed toward the poorest of our own citizens, except during the yuletide season. There are approximately thirty five million people below the poverty level in this country, most of them women, children, old people and cripples. What do we do with them? Cut their food stamps and "let them eat Ketchup?"

Where did these two C's come from? For me they appeared in my first college economics course, taught by a professor Jack Prince at Marietta College in Ohio. The students of my era were mostly "Daddy Republicans" out of the 50's. We looked upon college as a means to a good or better job. We wanted upward mobility and in that sense we weren't any different from the student of the 80's. We wanted the big car and house, the 2.3 children and the two martini lunch. We were taught that there's more to life. To Jack Prince, economics was more than income, profits and loss, benefits and cost. To him, economics was people and values and ethics and care and

compassion. What was care and compassion in those classes? Care was wondering why there were so many have-nots in the world and compassion was wanting to do something about it. I took four more courses from him and caring and compassion were an integral part of all of them.

When I first started thinking about this essay, I was going to end it by asking "Where do we go looking for these two C's"? I was going to suggest that the appropriate place to start would be the mirror. However, Americans are among the most generous people of the world. We probably give more away than any other country, yet the system is not working. Private charity is not doing the job. Government programs have failed.

Poor people need enough money to attain some minimum standard of living. I am suggesting that every person be guaranteed this minimum standard of living. I would set the minimum level at \$10,609 per year for a family of four.

My conservative uncle is turning in his grave screaming "What about incentive to work?" I would build this into the system by taxing people 50 cents for each dollar they earn. Thus a family of 4 that earns \$1000 would get the basic \$10,609, plus the \$1000, minus the \$500 they are taxed. They would be \$500 better off than if they did not work.

I recognize that this would be a difficult undertaking, but then poverty is difficult too.

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Stanley Antoniotti  
Chairperson

Political Science and Economics Department