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E.J. Dionne Calls for Some Democratic Spine

Michael Sean Winters | Dec. 2, 2010 Distinctly Catholic

E.J. Dionne's article this morning [1]points to a central problem facing the Democrats: They seem scared of their own shadow and the Republicans have succeeded in winning the narrative about tax rates and their economic effects.

Here is the problem. Remember "voodoo economics?" That was what George H. W. Bush called the supply-side theories that have come to dominate Republican Party economic thinking. That was 1980. Now, in 2010, no one has seriously challenged the acendency of this point of view. The reason is simple: Democrats hate talking about taxes on the theory that if you go into the ballot box thinking of yourself as a taxpayer, you are going to vote Republican. If you go in the voting boot thinking of yourself as a worker, you are going to vote Democratic. Ergo, Dems should talk about workplace issues and wages and not about taxes. But if you let the other side do all the talking, you can't change the narrative.

I would be perfectly content if the President dug in on tax cuts for the zillionaires. I wish the Democrats, when they controlled both houses of Congress, had thought to re-draft the tax code which is in drastic need of an additional, higher rate for the super-rich, those making more than $1 million per year. We don't need to raise taxes on doctors or small businessmen making $300,000, although that is a lot of money and they should be asked to pull their share. But, the way our crazy economy is structured to day, all the significant income growth is for the zillionaires, and that is where the U.S. Treasury should go fishing. As long as Democrats are afraid to talk about taxes, however, no one is going to challenge "voodoo economics."

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