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Is Paul Ryan a fraud?

Tom Gallagher | Aug. 21, 2012 NCR Today

Nobel Prize-winning economist Paul Krugman writes in a *New York Times* op-ed [1] piece Sunday:

> Ryanomics is and always has been a con game, although to be fair, it has become even more of a con since Mr. Ryan joined the ticket.

Krugman goes on the spell out exactly what the Ryan Budget actually does and doesn't do.

> On the tax side, Mr. Ryan proposes big cuts in tax rates on top income brackets and corporations.

This will lead to $4.3 trillion in lost revenue over the next decade.

> On the spending side, Mr. Ryan proposes huge cuts in Medicaid, turning it over to the states while sharply reducing funding relative to projections under current policy. That saves around $800 billion. He proposes similar harsh cuts in food stamps, saving a further $130 billion or so, plus a grab-bag of other cuts, such as reduced aid to college students. Let's be generous and say that all these cuts would save $1 trillion.

This includes the $716 billion in savings from Medicare, which is in both Obamacare and the Ryan Budget.

> If we add up Mr. Ryan's specific proposals, we have $4.3 trillion in tax cuts, partially offset by around $1.7 trillion in spending cuts -- with the tax cuts, surprise, disproportionately benefiting the top 1 percent, while the spending cuts would primarily come at the expense of low-income families. Over all, the effect would be to increase the deficit by around two and a half trillion dollars.

But how would Ryan offset the massive tax cuts? Ryan does not say.

What about the additional budget cuts -- where would they come from? Ryan does not say.

Writes Krugman:

> What Mr. Ryan actually offers, then, are specific proposals that would sharply increase the deficit, plus an assertion that he has secret tax and spending plans that he refuses to share with us, but which will turn his overall plan into deficit reduction.
>
> If this sounds like a joke, that's because it is. ... What's going on?
>
> The answer, basically, is a triumph of style over substance. Over the longer term, the Ryan plan would end Medicare as we know it -- and in Washington, "fiscal responsibility" is often equated with willingness to slash Medicare and Social Security, even if the purported savings would be used to cut taxes on the rich rather than to reduce deficits. Also, self-proclaimed centrists are always looking for conservatives they can praise to showcase their centrism, and Mr. Ryan has skillfully played into that weakness, talking a

> good game even if his numbers don't add up.
>
> The question now is whether Mr. Ryan's undeserved reputation for honesty and fiscal responsibility can survive his participation in a deeply dishonest and irresponsible presidential campaign.

Meanwhile, over the weekend, we learned [2] Paul Ryan is actually in favor of federal government stimulus spending and unemployment benefits when Republican President George W. Bush was in favor of it:

> When Congressman Paul Ryan has been asked the past few years about the value of stimulus to the sagging economy and the nation's jobless, the Wisconsin Republican has dismissed it as meaningless, and dubbed it "sugar-high economics."
>
> But that's when President Obama is pushing for the spending. When it was President George W. Bush arguing for more stimulus to boost a slow economy in the early 2000s, Ryan's economic analysis was entirely different.
>
> "What we're trying to accomplish today with the passage of this third stimulus package is to create jobs and help the unemployed," Ryan said, in comments unearthed by MSNBC's "Up with Chris Hayes" and provided to HuffPost.
>
> "What we're trying to accomplish is to pass the kinds of legislation that when they've passed in the past have grown the economy and gotten people back to work."
>
> Video of the comments will be aired at 8:00 a.m. Sunday on MSNBC.
>
> "In recessions unemployment lags on well after a recovery has taken place," Ryan accurately noted in 2002.

Later, the article states:

> "We've got to get the engine of economic growth growing again because we now know, because of recession, we don't have the revenues that we wanted to, we don't have the revenues we need, to fix Medicare, to fix Social Security, to fix these issues. We've got to get Americans back to work. Then the surpluses come back, then the jobs come back. That is the constructive answer we're trying to accomplish here on, yes, a bipartisan basis. I urge members to drop the demagoguery and to pass this bill to help us work together to get the American people back to work and help those people who've lost their jobs," Ryan said.
>
> Bush's stimulus, which included an extension of jobless benefits and resulted in checks being mailed to millions of Americans, was signed in March 2002.

And this is the reputation and behavior that Ryan's own bishop, Robert Morlino of Madison, Wis., is defending. Here's Morlino's defense of Ryan in Morlino's recent endorsement:

> But, as I've said, Vice Presidential Candidate Ryan is aware of Catholic Social Teaching and is very careful to fashion and form his conclusions in accord with the principles mentioned above. Of that I have no doubt. (I mention this matter in obedience to Church Law regarding one's right to a good reputation.)

What a joke.

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