



A Telling VP Choice?

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

Mitt Romney's chosen running mate, Paul Ryan, is the reverse of Sarah Palin. She was all right-wing flash without much substance. He's all right-wing substance without much flash.

Ryan is not a firebrand. He's not smarmy. He doesn't ooze contempt for opponents or ridicule those who disagree with him. In style and tone, he doesn't even sound like an ideologue — until you listen to what he has to say.

It's here — in Ryan's views and policy judgments — we find the true ideologue. More than any other politician today, Ryan exemplifies the social Darwinism at the core of today's Republican Party: Reward the rich, penalize the poor, let everyone else fend for themselves.

Dog eat dog.
Ryan's views are crystallized in the budget he produced for House Republicans in March as chairman of the House Budget Committee. That budget would cut \$3.3 trillion from low-income programs over the next decade. The biggest cuts would be in Medicaid, which provides health care for the nation's poor — forcing states to drop coverage for an estimated 14 million to 28 million low-income people, according to the nonpartisan Center for Budget and Policy Priorities.

Ryan's budget would also reduce food stamps for poor families by 17 percent (\$135 billion) over the decade, leading to a significant increase in hunger — particularly among children. It would also reduce housing assistance, job training, and Pell grants for college tuition.

In all, 62 percent of the budget cuts proposed by Ryan would come from low-income programs.

The Ryan plan would also turn Medicare into vouchers whose value won't possibly keep up with rising health-care costs — thereby shifting those costs to seniors.

At the same time, Ryan would provide a substantial tax cut to the very rich — who are already taking home an almost unprecedented share of the nation's total income. Today's 400 richest Americans have more wealth than the bottom 150 million of us put together.

Ryan's views are pure social Darwinism. As William Graham Sumner, the progenitor of social Darwinism in America, put it in the 1880s:

"Civilization has a simple choice." It's either "liberty, inequality, survival of the fittest" or "non-liberty, equality, survival of the unfittest. The former carries society forward and favors all its best members; the latter carries society downward and favors all its worst members."

Is this Romney's view as well?
Some believe Romney chose Ryan solely in order to drum up enthusiasm on the right. Since most Americans have already made up their minds about whom they'll



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vote for, and the polls show Americans highly polarized — with an almost equal number supporting Romney as Obama — the winner will be determined by how many on either side take the trouble to vote. So in picking Ryan, Romney is motivating his right-wing base to get to the polls and pull everyone else they can along with them.

But there's reason to believe Romney also agrees with Ryan's social Darwinism. Although Romney has carefully avoided specifics in his own economic plan, he has said he's "very supportive" of Ryan's budget plan: "It's a bold and exciting effort ... an excellent piece of work and very much needed ... very consistent with what I put out earlier."

At the same time, Romney wants to permanently extend the Bush tax cuts to the wealthy, reduce corporate income taxes and eliminate the estate tax. These tax reductions would increase the incomes of people earning more than \$1 million a year by an average of \$295,874 annually, according to the non-partisan Tax Policy Center.

Oh, did I mention that Romney and Ryan also want to repeal President Obama's health care law, thereby leaving 50 million Americans without health insurance?

Social Darwinism offered a moral justification for the wild inequities and social cruelties of the late 19th century. It also undermined all efforts to build a more broadly based prosperity and rescue our democracy from the tight grip of a very few at the top. It was used by the privileged and powerful to convince everyone else that government shouldn't do much of anything.

Not until the 20th century did America reject social Darwinism.

We created a large middle class that became the engine of our economy and our democracy. We built safety nets to catch Americans who fell downward, often through no fault of their own.

We taxed the rich and invested in public goods — public schools, public universities, public transportation, public parks, public health — that made us all better off.

In short, we rejected the notion that each of us is on our own in a competitive contest for survival.

By choosing Ryan, Romney has raised for the nation the starkest of choices: Do we want to return to that earlier time, or are we willing and able to move forward — toward a democracy and an economy that works for us all?

Robert B. Reich, Chancellor's Professor of Public Policy at the University of California and former U.S. Secretary of Labor, is the author of the newly released "Beyond Outrage: What has gone wrong with our economy and our democracy, and how to fix it," a Knopf e-book original.



Kathleen
PARKER

Cute but not reality, in fact.
HGB may have been a full-frontal, girlie siege of sassy talk, but she wrote her blockbuster book, "Sex and the Single Girl," at age 40 while married to the man who remained her husband until death did them part. It was, indeed, Brown's husband who urged her to write the book, the commercial appeal of which can't have escaped his calculations.

I don't necessarily doubt the sincerity of Brown's proclaimed feminism. It was of a different order than the subsequent feminism of Betty Friedan and Gloria Steinem, but Brown's was prescient in a way. Her use-mens-the-way-they've-always-used-women philosophy foreshadowed today's culture of pole-dancing moms and porn as women's ultimate expression of liberation.

While Friedan and Steinem urged women to withhold their favors from exploitative men, Brown implored: Always say yes to sex and take their money. Men will always be men, she seemed to be suggesting, so you may as well use their weaknesses to your advantage. Magazine cover headlines that

touted 50 ways to please your man were really Brown's way of saying "and get what you want."

But what do women really want, as Freud was fond of asking? Nothing much that *Cosmo* was offering. Like *Playboy*, which Brown triumphantly parodied with a nude centerfold of Burt Reynolds (and years later, former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Massachusetts Sen. Scott Brown), the message of cheap trinkets and shallow sex is the same. Maxed-out materialism defined the content and the motivating spirit of both venues.

HGB may have aspired to help young women who weren't blessed with looks or an education lead more interesting lives, as she claimed. But there's no getting there from here. A well-lived life ultimately isn't measured in sexual exploits or stiletto heels — or even by a wall of trophies and photo ops. Most adults figure this out, but it isn't clear that Brown, who got breast implants at 73 and lamented her "fat tummy" at 85, ever did.

The most telling line from all the tributes written about her may provide a clue. Brown said she never had children because "I didn't want to give up the time, the love, the money."

May the *Cosmo* Girl rest in peace.

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

VP Choices Change With The Times

The selection of Wisconsin Rep. Paul Ryan as the vice presidential running mate for presumptive Republican nominee Mitt Romney in some ways represents a symbolic nail in the coffin of traditional politics as we once understood it.

Without question, the pick sets up a clear contrast between the two tickets, which in itself is not unusual. The points of contention between the Romney-Ryan ticket and the team of Barack Obama and Joe Biden are many and obvious. It's difficult at this juncture to believe there will be many undecideds in the myriad polls that are going to inundate us between now and November.

But in one sense, what's so striking about Romney's pick of Ryan, who has made a name for himself in conservative circles with a famously hard-nosed, hard-line budget plan, is that it does the opposite of what vice presidential selections once traditionally did. The pick doesn't seek to broaden the base of support; instead, it doubles down on staunch ideological principles.

Vice presidential picks are probably quite overrated in the overall scheme of a campaign. A recent analysis estimated that these kinds of picks are perhaps good for a 3-6 point swing in the VP candidate's home state and they might add a little fuel to the base, but little else. However, risky picks, especially those that don't work out well, can have a somewhat greater — and more negative — impact than a safe choice. One could refer to this the Sarah Palin effect.

The VP slot was once used to add balance to a ticket. Often, this was a regional calculation, as when a presidential candidate from New England (say, John Kennedy in 1960) would select a southerner (Lyndon Johnson of Texas), in part, to balance the geography. Other examples from the last 50 years: Barry Goldwater of Arizona choosing William E. Miller of New York in 1964; Jimmy Carter of Georgia tabbing Minnesotan Walter Mondale in 1976; Michael Dukakis of Massachusetts selecting Lloyd Bentsen of Texas in 1988; and John Kerry of Massachusetts took on North Carolinian John Edwards in 2004.

The selections could also be used to bolster areas of concern on the presidential candidate's resumé or overall profile. This is what the Democrats did in 2008 when Obama, who had little experience on the international stage, tabbed Biden, who was rumored to be in the running for secretary of state. In some ways, that's also what Republican John McCain did that year when he chose Palin, who was younger and a woman, but the choice also represented ideological consolidation as it was popular among conservatives who may have still been wary of the maverick McCain.

And a choice can also be designed to broaden the ideological appeal. For instance, in 1980, conservative Ronald Reagan reached out to the more moderate George H.W. Bush, who was also listed as a Texan and who came to the job with considerable foreign service and intelligence experience. The Kennedy-Johnson ticket also serves as a prime example. (The ultimate example of diversity may have been in 1864, when Republican Abraham Lincoln tabbed loyalist Tennessee Democrat Andrew Johnson as his running mate during what turned into the final year of the Civil War.)

There is also the political calculus of the electoral map that comes into play, which is why many people thought Romney may go with Florida's Marco Rubio for the No. 2 slot.

But the value of a diverse ticket has arguably diminished through the years. In 1992, for example, it seemed illogical for southern Gov. Bill Clinton to pick southern Sen. Al Gore as his running mate, but it worked.

However, when political parties choose not to diversify their tickets or seek balance, something is lost — or something is being declared. The parties run the danger of becoming too one-dimensional and playing too resolutely to the base instead of trying to appeal to the broader spectrum of America. Unfortunately, that type of thinking would seem to match up quite well with today's viciously polarized political climate.

In that sense, the world feels out of balance, in more ways than one.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Aug. 15, the 228th day of 2012. There are 138 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Aug. 15, 1483, the Sistine Chapel was consecrated by Pope Sixtus IV.

On this date: In 1057, Macbeth, King of Scots, was killed in battle by Malcolm, the eldest son of King Duncan, whom Macbeth had slain.

In 1769, Napoleon Bonaparte was born on the island of Corsica.

In 1812, the Battle of Fort Dearborn took place as Potawatomi warriors attacked a U.S. military garrison of about 100 people. (Most of the garrison was killed, while the remainder were taken prisoner.)

In 1914, the Panama Canal opened to traffic.

In 1935, humorist Will Rogers and aviator Wiley Post were killed when their airplane crashed near Point Barrow in the Alaska Territory.

In 1945, in a radio address, Japan's Emperor Hirohito announced that his country had accepted terms of surrender for ending World War II.

In 1947, India became independent after some 200 years of British rule.

In 1961, as workers began constructing a Berlin Wall made of concrete, East German soldier Conrad Schumann leapt to freedom over a tangle of barbed wire in a scene captured in a famous photograph.

In 1969, the Woodstock Music and Art Fair opened in upstate New York.

In 1971, President Richard Nixon announced a 90-day freeze on wages, prices and rents. Bahrain declared its independence from Britain.

In 1974, a gunman attempted to shoot South Korean President Park Chung-hee during a speech; although Park was unhurt, his wife was struck and killed, along with a teenage girl. (The gunman was later executed.)

In 1998, 29 people were killed by a car bomb that tore apart the center of Omagh, Northern Ireland; a splinter group calling itself the Real IRA claimed responsibility.

Ten years ago: President George W. Bush, using Mount Rushmore as a dramatic backdrop, pressed Congress to give him a flexible, fast-moving homeland security department.

Five years ago: Former NBA referee Tim Donaghy pleaded guilty to felony charges for taking cash payoffs from gamblers and betting on games he'd officiated in a scandal that rocked the league. (Donaghy spent 13 months in federal prison.) A magnitude-8 earthquake in Peru's southern desert killed some 540 people. Master jazz percussionist Max Roach died in New York at age 83.

One year ago: A relentless barrage of bombings in Iraq killed 63 people, striking 17 cities from northern Sunni areas to the southern Shiite heartland. Jim Thome hit his 600th home run an inning after he hit No. 599 to help the Minnesota Twins outslug the Detroit Tigers 9-6. (Thome became the eighth major league player to reach 600.)

Today's Birthdays: Actress Rose Marie is 89. Political activist Phyllis Schlafly is 88. Actor Mike Connors is 87. Game show host Jim Lange is 80. Actress Lori Nelson is 79. Civil rights activist Vernon Jordan is 77. Actor Jim Dale is 77. Actress Pat Priest is 76. Supreme Court Justice Stephen Breyer is 74. U.S. Rep. Maxine Waters, D-Calif., is 74. Musician Pete York (Spencer Davis Group) is 70. Author-journalist Linda Ellerbee is 68. Songwriter Jimmy Webb is 66. Rock singer-musician Tom Johnston (The Doobie Brothers) is 64. Actress Phyllis Smith (TV: "The Office") is 63. Britain's Princess Anne is 62. Actress Tess Harper is 62. Actor Larry Mathews is 57. Actor Zeljko Ivanek is 55. Actor-comedian Rondell Sheridan is 54. Rock singer-musician Matt Johnson (The The) is 51. Movie director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu is 49. Country singer Angela Rae (Wild Horses) is 46. Actor Peter Hermann is 45. Actress Debra Messing is 44. Actor Anthony Anderson is 42. Actor Ben Affleck is 40. Singer Mikey Graham (Boyzone) is 40. Actress Natasha Henstridge is 38. Actress Nicole Paggi is 35. Figure skater Jennifer Kirk is 28. Latin pop singer Belinda is 23. Rock singer Joe Jonas (The Jonas Brothers) is 23. Actor-singer Carlos Pena is 23. Actress Jennifer Lawrence (Film: "The Hunger Games") is 22. Rap DJ Smoove da General (Call Swag District) is 22.

Thought for Today: "Men are from Earth, women are from Earth. Deal with it." — George Carlin, American comedian (1937-2008).

FROM THE BIBLE

But the Lord is the true God; He is the living God and the everlasting King. Jeremiah 10:10. Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

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