

HOPE AND (SMALL) CHANGE



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Playing Economic Chicken

BY ROBERT B. REICH
Tribune Media Services

With the election behind us, I had hoped our politicians would get beyond games of chicken. No such luck.

First, you need to understand that the upcoming game of chicken isn't about how much or when we cut the budget deficit, or even whether the upcoming "fiscal cliff" poses a danger to the economy.

The nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office warned last week that the automatic tax increases and spending cuts scheduled to start in January amount to too much deficit reduction, too soon. They'd put the economy back into recession and push unemployment to about 9 percent. But the CBO also warned of an economic crisis ahead if the United States doesn't stem the growth of the nation's exploding deficit.

That's the bind we're in. Reduce the budget deficit too quickly, and we're in trouble. But fail to address the deficit, and we're also in trouble.

It's really a matter of timing. That's why I think any deal should include a trigger mechanism that begins to cut spending and raise taxes when the economy has two consecutive quarters of 6 percent unemployment or less, and 3 percent annualized growth or more.

But the upcoming game of chicken in Washington isn't really about any of this. It's about the clearest issue President Obama and Mitt Romney fought over: whether taxes should be raised on the rich.

Democrats and Republicans are now maneuvering to maximize their bargaining leverage when they sit down next year to decide this.

Last Friday, the president called on Congress to immediately make permanent the tax cuts for Americans who make less than \$250,000 a year, while at the same time allowing tax rates to rise for wealthy Americans — and then making those rates part of a broader deal next year.

Meanwhile, House Speaker John Boehner has proposed that all the tax cuts — including those for the rich — be extended until next year, until there's a deal. "I'm proposing that we avert the fiscal cliff together in a manner that ensures that 2013 is finally the year that our government comes to grips with the major problems that are facing us," Boehner said.



Robert REICH

So what's going to happen? Bear with me, because this gets interesting.

The president knows Republicans won't make permanent the tax cuts for people earning under \$250,000 without also making them permanent for wealthier taxpayers.

So how will Democrats force the GOP's hand?

Democrats figure they'll have most of the bargaining leverage in next year's deal if they do nothing now, allowing tax rates to rise automatically on everyone in January. Then they'll offer Republicans a deal that reduces taxes on people earning less than \$250,000 — which would be retroactive to Jan. 1. So we'll go over the fiscal cliff, but because the subsequent deal is retroactive, it will be more like a gentle hill than a cliff.

Democrats believe this will trap the GOP, because Republicans will then have to choose between a tax cut for the middle class or no tax cut at all. And given their ideological commitment to cutting taxes, Republicans will have to go along with a tax cut on the middle class.

But Republicans figure they'll have more bargaining leverage if they keep things as they are until February or March, when the debt ceiling has to be raised again. This way, Republicans can again threaten to vote against raising it unless they get their way on taxes.

This is why Boehner wants legislation that will keep the government spending and taxing at current levels right through the start of the year, and thereby avoid the fiscal cliff.

So who blinks first? Democrats, who don't mind going over the cliff because they'll get a better final deal — and the deal will be retroactive to Jan. 1, so it's not really a cliff at all, but more like a little hill? Or Republicans, who want to extend the Bush tax cuts beyond Jan. 1 until we get sufficiently close to the debt ceiling that they can once again threaten the full faith and credit of America?

Remember, if nothing is done between now and January, tax rates automatically rise on everyone at the start of the year. That means Obama and the Democrats are in the strongest position right now. Let's hope they don't blink.

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 "Beyond Outrage: What has gone wrong with our economy and our democracy, and how to fix it," a Knopf release now out in paperback.

Snatching Defeat From Victory

BY MICHAEL REAGAN
CagleCartoons.com

Wait until next year — 2016, that is.

That's what disappointed Republican spinners kept saying Tuesday night as they watched Mitt Romney's hopes crash and burn in swing state after swing state.

How many times did I hear a Republican talk about how their party's deep bench of future all-stars will return it to power in Washington in four years?

But all the Ryans, Rubios, Bushes, Haleys and Christies in America can't put the GOP — or the country — back together again.

The GOP is a wreck — and not just in California, where the party's registration is now below 30 percent.

Look how easily the Republican Party managed to turn what should have been a sure victory over an incompetent and dangerous incumbent into an embarrassing defeat.

First they tore each other to shreds in a bitter primary, smearing their eventual nominee in debates as a rich, uncaring profiteer who put working people out on the street and shipped their jobs overseas.

Then, while Obama's ads in the battleground states reinforced the Republican-made caricature of Mitt, the Romney campaign did just about everything wrong.

It squandered the GOP convention and tried to make their candidate into "Mitt the Moderate." Team Romney also shunned their natural allies in talk radio and didn't reach out for help from conservatives like me.

I would have been glad to help the Romney campaign in Ohio or Pennsylvania, where I worked for my father in 1980. I offered, but the phone never rang. It didn't ring for Bill O'Reilly or for the other major radio and TV talk shows, either.

But Team Romney's biggest mistake was playing prevent defense after his big victory in the first debate. It was a terrible, fatal blunder.

Instead of hammering away at the horror of Obamacare, the cover-up in Benghazi and President Eye-Candy's four years of failure, Romney ran the last five weeks hoping the clock would run out before Obama could recover.

But you don't play prevent defense when you are running in second place in Ohio, Virginia, Florida — and



Michael REAGAN

Tuesday's results proved it.

Hurricane Sandy struck Mitt a final blow, giving Obama the chance to look presidential and making Mitt disappear from the media for four days.

But give credit to Obama's Chicago Gang. They ran a much better campaign — on the ground and in the air. They got out the vote and Obama got out his message of class envy and federal entitlements for all, without any trouble from his toadies in the media.

Now bigger deficits, higher taxes and a stagnant economy lie ahead for as far as the eye can see. And socialized medicine — which my father warned was coming to America 50 years ago — is going to soon become a reality via Obamacare.

Team Romney blew an easy win because it had a poor game plan. But it also lost because the Republican Party is all talk and no guts when it comes to fighting for real conservatism — Ronald Reagan conservatism.

GOP bigwigs constantly praise my father. For years they've used him to suck true conservatives into the party, but they've never really embraced Reaganism or its ideals.

They didn't in the 1980s and they still don't today. They only talk about him. The party bosses don't really think like him.

Most of those Republican candidates who lost Tuesday played the same game of pretend. "I'm like Ronald Reagan!" "No, I'm like Ronald Reagan!"

But most of them aren't like my father. They weren't waving the "bold colors" of real conservatism he talked about in 1975. The banners of the losers — like Mitt's — were colored in "pale pastels."

The GOP needs a new playbook. Unless it starts embracing my father's conservative ideals instead of just paying lip service to them, the so-called "Party of Ronald Reagan" may never win another national election.

Michael Reagan is the son of President Ronald Reagan, a political consultant, and the author of "The New Reagan Revolution" (St. Martin's Press). He is the founder and chairman of The Reagan Group and president of The Reagan Legacy Foundation. Visit his websites at www.reagan.com and www.michaelereagan.com. Send comments to Reagan@caglecartoons.com. Follow @reaganworld on Twitter.

YOUR LETTERS

Gratitude

Deborah Stevens, Yankton

I was stopped at a four-way stop recently and didn't notice the license plate of the truck in front of me right away.

However, as I took the time to look, I was humbled ... truly humbled. It said, "First In, Last Out." It was driven by one of our volunteer firefighters.

I just want to say a HUGE thank you to all of those who stand for our community in this effort. Your time, courage and community spirit is so appreciated.

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OPINION | OUR VIEW

A Newspaper's Brand And Political Tricks

Like any other business, one of the essential ingredients in creating a successful newspaper is bonding with your customers. You cultivate a level of trust with those who purchase your product, meaning they will know what to expect from you in each edition. This is something that's hard-earned, and it is never taken lightly.

As such, we can't blame the publisher of the *Dakota Dunes/North Sioux City Times* for becoming upset when, just before last week's election, the Union County Republican Party put out a publication titled the "Lincoln Union County Times" that looked a lot like the actual newspaper, but its content was devoted to promoting GOP candidates and positions.

According to Dakota Dunes/North Sioux City publisher Bruce Odson, several of his readers were confused by the lookalike publication, creating what he called "mass confusion."

"We got calls saying, 'I can't believe you did that,' and I explained it wasn't us," he told the *Press & Dakotan*.

Odson devoted a part of the front page of last week's edition to highlight the incident and set the record straight.

He added that he believed the local party "knew that they were creating that confusion when they were sending it out."

Not so, said District 16 State Sen. Dan Lederman, who is the county party's chairman. He said the product was not a copycat publication. The name was "completely different" and had a disclaimer on it stating it was from the Union County GOP.

"I think Bruce Odson thinks people are stupid ..., " Lederman told the *P&D*.

Given the feedback and complaints Odson said he had, one must wonder what Lederman thinks of those people.

The GOP publication was clearly intended to confuse people. No, it wasn't an exact replica, so Lederman can justify the effort in that way, but it looked close enough to the actual newspaper — using a serif font in all caps for the "Times" name and employing many of the same design elements, albeit slightly altered — that it had to be designed to closely resemble a real and familiar publication.

Lederman has a point in that the name was different and there was a disclaimer, but this explanation is a technicality that glosses over the very important concept of branding. The brand — in this case, the nameplate — is what the readers see, day after day or week after week, and they become completely familiar with it visually. It's really no different than a logo for a soft drink or a chain store. As such, consumers might not notice the small but important tweaks that distinguish a copycat from the genuine article. That doesn't make the readers stupid; instead, it indicates in this case how effectively the real newspaper has branded itself visually. It also shows how carefully the copycat publication worked to mimic the real deal.

Lederman added that the party publication was called "Times" because it was a "name that was synonymous with newspapers." Well, so are such names as Journal, Press, Herald, Post, News, Gazette, Chronicle and Tribune. Of course, none of those titles sound like the *Dakota Dunes/North Sioux City Times*, which again was most certainly the point.

The faux publication's purpose in terms of its design was to function like a curveball that its creators hoped to throw by enough people to perhaps sway some votes. You can't fool all of the people all of the time, but if you can fool *some* of them once, on the eve of an election ...

There are probably just enough differences in the GOP publication's look — coupled with the disclaimer — that allow the makers of the copycat to legally get away with what they did. Perhaps that can be chalked up to crafty politics.

But the maneuver also willfully strays into unethical territory. It played on the market's familiarity with a local brand and tried to dress up campaign copy as real news. It was a calculated and devious ploy, and Odson has every right to be upset that his publication's brand could be mimicked in such a way.

At the very least, Lederman owes Odson and the readers of the *Dakota Dunes/North Sioux City Times* an apology.

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TODAY IN HISTORY

By The Associated Press

Today is Wednesday, Nov. 14, the 319th day of 2012. There are 47 days left in the year.

Today's Highlight in History: On Nov. 14, 1862, during the Civil War, President Abraham Lincoln gave the go-ahead for Maj. Gen. Ambrose Burnside's plan to capture the Confederate capital of Richmond; the resulting Battle of Fredericksburg proved a disaster for the Union.

On this date: In 1851, Herman Melville's novel "Moby-Dick; Or, The Whale" was first published in the United States.

In 1881, Charles J. Guiteau went on trial for assassinating President James A. Garfield. (Guiteau was convicted and hanged the following year.)

In 1889, inspired by Jules Verne, New York World reporter Nellie Bly (Elizabeth Cochran) set out to travel around the world in less than 80 days. (She made the trip in 72 days.) Jawaharlal Nehru, the first prime minister of independent India, was born.

In 1910, Eugene B. Ely became the first aviator to take off from a ship as his Curtiss pusher rolled off a sloping platform on the deck of the scout cruiser USS Birmingham off Hampton Roads, Va.

In 1922, the British Broadcasting Co. began its domestic radio service.

In 1940, during World War II, German planes destroyed most of the English town of Coventry.

In 1944, Tommy Dorsey and his orchestra recorded "Opus No. 1" for RCA Victor.

In 1969, Apollo 12 blasted off for the moon.

In 1970, a chartered Southern Airways DC-9 crashed while trying to land in Huntington, W.Va., killing all 75 people on board, including the Marshall University football team and its coaching staff.

In 1972, the Dow Jones Industrial Average closed above the 1,000 level for the first time, ending the day at 1,003.16.

In 1986, the Securities and Exchange Commission imposed a \$100 million penalty against inside-trader Ivan F. Boesky and barred him from working again in the securities industry.

In 1997, a jury in Fairfax, Va., decided that Pakistani national Aimal Khan Kasi should get the death penalty for gunning down two CIA employees outside agency headquarters.

Ten years ago: Aimal Khan Kasi was executed by injection at a prison in Jarrott, Va., for the slayings of two CIA employees in 1993. Pope John Paul II made a historic speech to Italy's parliament, urging Italians

to work for world peace, uphold their Christian values and have more babies. Actor-comedian Eddie Bracken died in Montclair, N.J., at age 87.

Five years ago: Michael Mukasey took a ceremonial oath as the new U.S. Attorney General, five days after he was privately sworn in. A justice of the peace ordered O.J. Simpson to stand trial on kidnapping and armed robbery charges stemming from a confrontation with memorabilia dealers in a Las Vegas casino hotel room. (Simpson and a co-defendant were convicted in Oct. 2008.) The prime ministers of North and South Korea launched their first talks in 15 years.

One year ago: Former Penn State football assistant coach Jerry Sandusky, in an interview with NBC News' "Rock Center," denied allegations he'd sexually abused eight boys and said any activities in a campus shower with a boy were just horseplay. A Russian spacecraft carrying NASA astronaut Dan Burbank and two Russians blasted off from the snow-covered Kazakh steppes, headed for the International Space Station.

Today's Birthdays: Former U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is 90. Actress Kathleen Hughes is 84. Former MLB All-Star Jimmy Piersall is 83. Former NASA astronaut Fred Haise is 79. Jazz musician Ellis Marsalis is 78. Composer Wendy Carlos is 73. Writer P.J. O'Rourke is 65. Zydeco singer-musician Buckwheat Zydeco is 65. Britain's Prince Charles is 64. Rock singer-musician James Young (Styx) is 63. Singer Stephen Bishop is 61. Blues musician Anson Funderburgh is 58. Pianist Yanni is 58. Former Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is 58. Presidential adviser Valerie Jarrett is 56. Actress Laura San Giacomo is 51. Actor D.B. Sweeney is 51. Rapper Reverend Run (Run-DMC) is 48. Actor Patrick Warburton is 48. Rock musician Nic Dalton is 48. Country singer Rockie Lynne is 48. Pop singer Jeanette Jurado (Exposé) is 47. Retired MLB All-Star pitcher Curt Schilling is 46. Rock musician Brian Yale is 44. Rock singer Butch Walker is 43. Actor Josh Duhamel is 40. Rock musician Travis Barker is 37. Contemporary Christian musician Robby Shaffer is 37. Actor Brian Dietzen (TV: "NCIS") is 35. Rapper Shyheim is 35. Rock musician Tobin Esperance (Papa Roach) is 33. Actress Olga Kurylenko is 33. Actor Graham Patrick Martin is 21.

Thought for Today: "I never gave away anything without wishing I had kept it; nor kept anything without wishing I had given it away." — Louise Brooks, American actress (born this date in 1906, died 1985).

FROM THE BIBLE

Jacob said, "I will not let You go unless You bless me." Genesis 32:26.
Portals of Prayer, Concordia Publishing House, St. Louis

CONTACT US

PHONE:
(605) 665-7811
(800) 743-2968
NEWS FAX:
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ADVERTISING FAX:
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