

It's NOT the Economy Stupid, It's Theology

✘ What if a panel of the top 100 economists in America went to Barack Obama and said: "Raising taxes on the so-called rich is not a good idea. Not now, anyway. The money you would get from them will not put a dent in the deficit ... and it won't stimulate the economy. In fact, it will hurt the economy. The money they would give to the government will no longer be there to hire new employees. In fact, increasing the taxes on the very people who create jobs might result in higher, not lower, unemployment in this country."

What do you think President Obama would do if he got that advice? I think he'd try to raise taxes on the rich anyway. For liberal Democrats like Mr. Obama, raising taxes on the wealthy isn't really about economics. It's about politics – and theology.

I have noted before in this space, George Bernard Shaw's famous observation that "Any government that robs Peter to pay Paul, can always depend on the support of Paul." And since there are a lot more Pauls out there than Peters, the president figures class warfare is a good political strategy as he kicks off his re-election campaign.

He may be right. According to the latest CBS News/New York Times poll, 56 percent of Americans think taxes should be increased on households earning \$250,000 a year or higher to help lower the deficit; only 37 percent disagree.

Most Americans, however, are abysmally ignorant of how the economy works. I wonder if they'd be in favor of tax hikes on the so-called rich, if their boss at some small business said, "Sorry, I just got a tax hike and I can't afford to keep you on the payroll any longer."

As for the theology part ...

Liberal Democrats think raising taxes on people who make a lot of money is a matter of social justice. If you have more money "than you need," they figure – spread it around to those who don't have as much, as candidate Obama told Joe the Plumber. Liberals – even those who don't take religion all that seriously – see higher taxes on the wealthy as a moral issue. (That is, when they're not cynically calculating how many of those Pauls they can get to vote for them with their "tax the rich" message. As far as they're concerned, Peter can go to hell.)

I have no problem with this philosophy – in church. Give all you want to the less fortunate. But people who have taken risks, who have marketable talents, who work hard for their money, have no obligation to share it with everyone who isn't doing as well – and that includes the kind of people who never took education seriously and who as adults may lead dysfunctional lives. Helping the working poor is one thing. Helping losers is something else all together. That may not sound terribly "Christian" but that's not my concern.

So as the campaign heats up, Republicans might want to consider a brand new strategy: Give President Obama everything he wants in his latest stimulus plan – the one he keeps telling us that Congress must pass "right now." And when the economy tanks, hang the mess around Barack Obama's neck, because that's just where it belongs. Then pray that the American people have enough sense to elect a Republican House, Senate and president who will undo the damage that Mr. Obama and his liberal pals in Congress have done.

From my keyboard to God's ears ...