

Rob Peter to Pay Paul: Bad Economics! Good Politics?

☒ So the man who once promised he would bring us together has now kicked off his campaign for re-election determined to tear us apart. Irony doesn't begin to tell the story.

Barack Obama went to conservative Kansas "laying out a populist argument for his re-lection next year," as the page one story in the New York Times described it. Or to put it another way, President Obama went to Kansas laying out his campaign strategy which is simple and easy to understand: He will do every thing he can to divide Americans into two camps – the greedy rich and everyone else.

And he will make clear every chance he gets that if we re-elect him he will do everything he can to take money from those who have it and distribute it to everyone else, especially the hard-pressed middle class which, coincidentally, takes in most of the folks who will choose the next president.

In Kansas he blamed "the breathtaking greed of a few" for the financial crisis and said, "This is a make-or-break moment for the middle class, and all those who are fighting to get into the middle class." Republicans, he said, "want to go back to the same policies that stacked the deck against middle class Americans for way too many years. And their philosophy is simple: We are better off when everybody is left to find for themselves and play by there own rules. I am here to say they are wrong."

Never mind that Republicans also want the middle class to succeed. They just don't think that taxing the rich is going to help the middle class. Mr. Obama's plan may not be good economics, but it just might be good politics. As I have

mentioned in this space before, quoting George Bernard Shaw, "A government with the policy to rob Peter to pay Paul can be assured of the support of Paul."

That's what worries me. I have no faith in Paul. I think Paul is the real greedy SOB in this story, the one who has no problem taking money from rich people. Why not, Paul figures. They have it. I need it. And the president says it's okay to feel this way.

So, unlike many of my conservative compadres, I think Mr. Obama's class warfare strategy may succeed. And let's say it does. Let's say he wins re-election. Then comes gridlock, which is fine with me. It's not likely that the president will have long enough coattails – if he has any at all – to change the political complexion of Congress. So the president knows he's not going to get his tax increase on the rich. None of this is about actually doing that. It's all about politics. The man who promised to usher in a new era in politics is playing the oldest political game in the books: divide and conquer.

Taking money from the haves in order to buy allegiance from the have-nots wouldn't do much to create growth in the economy, anyway. Good chance, it would do just the opposite. Raise the taxes on the wealthiest among us, the ones who create jobs, and they just might want to hang on to their money instead of spending in on salaries for new employees.

But going after rich people is in the DNA of liberal Democrats. It makes them feel good about themselves. And remember, Franklin Roosevelt ran against "the plutocrats" in 1936 and despite a depression and high unemployment, he easily won re-election.

How does it end if Mr. Obama is re-elected? What happens to our economy then? Well let's just say they tried this

Peter/Paul thing already – in Europe. How's that working out over there? Something for all the Pauls to think about before they vote next November.