

H A R L A N R I C H A R D S

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Vice-president Paul Ryan:
Are You Kidding?

Mitt Romney chose Paul Ryan as his running mate - a man renowned for his determination to end social security. It reminds me of 2008 when John McCain, realizing he couldn't win, chose Sarah Palin as his running mate. He wanted to shake things up and throw a wild card into the election. It backfired on McCain and I hope it backfires on Romney. He could have chosen a more popular Republican who would appeal to moderates and undecided voters. Instead, he opted for a conservative ideologue to bolster his base - a choice that draws a line in the sand. There is no doubt what Romney stands for: making rich people richer at the expense of everyone else.

The choice looks like an act of desperation. He knows that if people vote their own best interests, he will lose. But by choosing Ryan, he doubled-down on his newly-acquired right-wing ideology. It remains to be seen whether Romney's propaganda machine can dupe enough people to win the election.

Let me clear about what Ryan stands for: He wants to end social security as we know it. Instead of a guaranteed stipend for life after a person retires, he wants to force people to place their payroll deductions into investment accounts. After retirement, they draw on those accounts until they're depleted. Then what? Are seniors expected to starve to death? Die in a gutter, homeless and abandoned? He also wants limits placed on medicare so that seniors are given vouchers to buy insurance. Any shortfall between the amount of voucher and the price of health insurance must be paid by seniors. This will save the government lots of money - while it forces seniors to die from lack of medical care because they can't pay the extra money to get insurance.

After we shut down social security and tens of thousands of seniors die from exposure and lack of medical care, the ensuing outcry over the horror stories will cost our country trillions of dollars to reinstate social security and give the safety net back to seniors. It is easier to maintain the system we have than to recreate it after it is abolished.

That's why I say that the only way Romney will win is if he can dupe enough people into electing him against their own best interests. Only the wealthy will benefit from a Romney presidency.

Who are you going to vote for?

As an aside, Republicans in general are intent on repealing or changing decades-old policies that have been in place for so long people no longer remember why they were created. The 1930s era banking laws which Democratic President Bill Clinton and the Republican Congress repealed in the 1990s are a prime example of this. Those changes were the reason we had an economic meltdown in 2008 when the housing bubble burst.

With the safeguards removed, large banks were free to gamble vast amounts of money they borrowed using collateralized debt obligation and credit default swaps. Our government (wrongly, I believe) bailed them out and in the aftermath, Republicans fought tooth and nail to prevent creating any sort of regulatory structure to stop further crises. Once again, Republicans have only one agenda - make the rich wealthier at the expense of everyone else.