

Excerpts from War on the Weak, Newsweek, April 18, 2011

War on the Weak

By Jonathan Chait

Paul Ryan, the House Budget Committee chairman, who fashions himself the intellectual leader of the party, unveiling a budget manifesto he calls the "Path to Prosperity."

The Tea Party began early in 2009 after an improvised rant by Rick Santelli, a CNBC commentator who called for an uprising to protest the Obama administration's subsidizing the "losers' mortgages." Video of his diatribe rocketed around the country, and protesters quickly adopted both his call for a tea party and his general abhorrence of government that took from the virtuous and the successful and gave to the poor, the uninsured, the bankrupt—in short, the losers. It sounded harsh, Santelli quickly conceded, but "at the end of the day I'm an Ayn Rand."

Ayn Rand, of course, was a kind of politicized L. Ron Hubbard—a novelist-philosopher who inspired a cult of acolytes who deem her the greatest human being who ever lived.

Rand viewed the capitalists, not the workers, as the producers of all wealth, and the workers, not the capitalists, as useless parasites.

Ryan once appeared at a gathering to honor her philosophy, where he announced, "The reason I got involved in public service, by and large, if I had to credit one thinker, one person, it would be Ayn Rand."

(Every policy change of the last decade that increased the deficit—the Bush tax cuts, the Medicare prescription-drug benefit, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq—Ryan voted for.) He is also invoking Rand's almost theological certainty that when a government punishes the strong to reward the weak, it must invariably collapse.

Viewed as an effort to reduce the debt, Ryan's plan makes little sense. Many of its proposals either have nothing to do with reducing deficits (repealing the financial-reform bill loathed by Wall Street) or actually increase deficits (making the Bush tax cuts permanent).

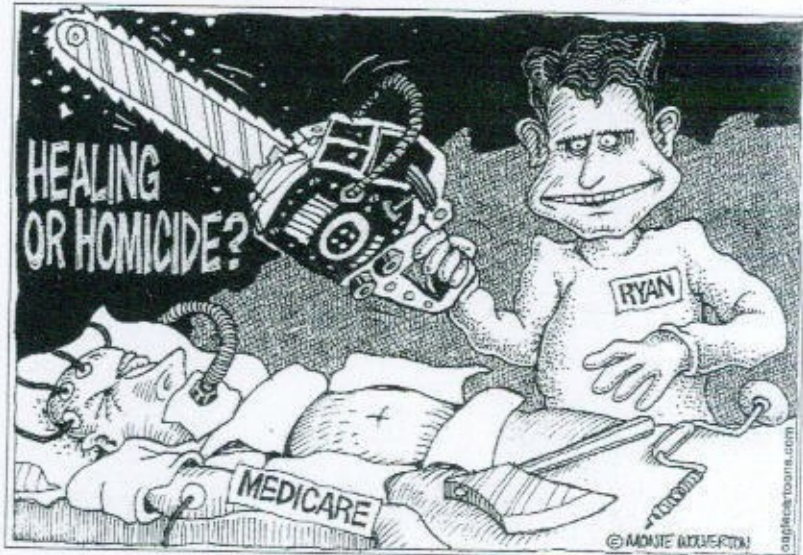
Ryan's plan does do two things in immediate and specific ways: hurt the poor and help the rich. After extending the Bush tax cuts, he would cut the top rate for individuals and corporations from 35 percent to 25 percent. Then Ryan slashes Medicaid, Pell Grants, food stamps, and low-income housing.

Ryan spares anybody over the age of 55 from any Medicare or Social Security cuts, because, he says, they "have organized their lives around these programs." But the roughly one in seven Americans (and nearly one in four children) on food stamps? Apparently they can have their benefits yanked away because they were only counting on using them to eat.

Ryan casts these cuts as an incentive for the poor to get off their lazy butts.

Ryan is saying that the poor should not only be denied cash income but also food and health care.

The class tinge of Ryan's Path to Prosperity is striking. The poorest Americans would suffer immediate, explicit budget cuts. Middle-class Americans would face distant, uncertain reductions in benefits. And the richest Americans would enjoy an immediate windfall.



- ① Cartoon: Is Paul Ryan going to fix or kill Medicare?
ARTICLE: ② Paul Ryan is the chairman of the House Budget Committee, and being that the Republican now control the House of Representatives he's a Republican political party.
- ③ Rick Santelli of CNBC helped create the Tea Party in 2009. ④ He didn't want the gov't to help people who had gotten bad debts. He didn't want the gov't to take from the successful and give to the poor, the uninsured, and the bankrupt.
- ⑤ Ayn Rand saw workers as useless parasites. ⑥ Paul Ryan credits Ayn Rand for his getting involved in public service (politics). ⑦ Ayn Rand believed that when you tax the rich and help the poor, that the gov't is punishing the strong to reward the weak. ⑧ Paul Ryan claims he's trying to fix the deficits, but then he has voted for things that increase them, such as the Bush tax cuts, the Medicare drug benefit, two wars, and making the Bush tax cuts permanent. ⑨ Ryan's plan would hurt the poor and help the rich. ⑩ Ryan would slash Medicaid, Pell Grants, food stamps, and low-income housing. ⑪ Ryan believes the poor need to get off their lazy butts. ⑫ Ryan believes the gov't shouldn't help the poor with cash, food, or health care.