Why Won't the Corporate Media Push Back Against Liar Think Tanks and Experts?

September 13, 2016

Matt Lauer was publicly roasted last week after he failed to hold Donald Trump to account during the "Commander-in-Chief Candidates Forum," but Lauer isn't the only media personality -- or "news person," whatever that means these days -- who needs to step up his game and press guests to tell the truth.

We shouldn't just be demanding tougher treatment of presidential debate candidates.

We should be demanding that interviewers in the media start calling out so-called "experts" when the experts are caught distorting the truth.

Earlier this morning for example, "Morning Joe" hosted one of Donald Trump's informal economic advisors, Larry Kudlow, who revealed this shocking revelation about who really was the first president to use "supply-side economics," also known as trickle-down "Reaganomics"

There's just one major, glaring problem with Kudlow's analysis.

It's not true.

John F. Kennedy didn't invent trickle-down Reaganomics, and his policies had nothing to do with trickle-down Reaganomics.

Kudlow wasn't entirely wrong when he said that Kennedy suggested we should cut marginal income tax rates, Kennedy's plan cut the lowest earners' taxes from 20 percent to 14 percent, and it cut the highest earners' taxes from 91 percent to 65 percent.

But the Kennedy tax code also closed a series of loopholes and tax exemptions, so the overall effect was that the government took in more tax revenue than before the "cuts."

It was, in other words, a tax hike.

And he made it explicitly clear during his third debate against Richard Nixon that his changes to the tax code would increase tax revenue, the definition of a tax increase, and wouldn't be offset by gutting government spending.

So why is Kudlow out peddling this bogus notion that John F. Kennedy, a Democrat, actually invented supply-side economics?

It's probably because the early '60s was pretty much the only time in 20th century US history that cutting the top tax rate has coincided with an increase in real economic growth.

As Mehrun Etebari pointed out back in 2003 at FairEconomy.org, there are at least four simple pieces of evidence that show that trickle-down economics doesn't work.

During the half-century period between 1954 and 2003, Etabari notes that, "Overall, there seems to be no close relationship between the top tax rate and the GDP growth rate, and statistical analysis backs this up."

During that same 50-year period, there was also no relationship between tax cuts and median household income either.

Etabari writes that, "Once again, the lack of connection between [top tax rates and household median income] is backed up by a correlation coefficient of near zero. … And yes, yet again, the coefficient is positive, indicating that income has gone up slightly (though negligibly) more in years with higher taxes."

He also shows that there are no connections between top tax rates and hourly wages or job creation, and he sums up that "any attempt to stimulate economic growth by cutting taxes for the rich will do nothing, it hasn't worked over the past 50 years, so why would it work in the future?"

But cutting tax rates for rich people does have one consistent and predictable outcome, the rich get a lot richer and working people get the shaft. The past 40-plus years of Reaganomics have proven that year after year.

Unfortunately, harsh historical realities aren't going to stop think tanks like the Cato Institute and FreedomWorks from manufacturing research for pseudo-economists like Kudlow and Art Laffer to peddle, on mainstream corporate outlets like CNN, Fox "so-called" News or the allegedly liberal MSNBC.

And harsh historical realities aren't going to stop Kudlow from trying to give credence to the terrible failure of trickle-down Reaganomics by blaming Kennedy.

In reality, Kennedy shaped his policies based on Keynesian economics, which is in direct opposition to the Libertarian Milton Friedman school of so-called "free market" economics that's promoted "trickle-down" Reaganomics for more than 50 years.

But people who watched Kudlow's segment on "Morning Joe" wouldn't know that because reporters don't challenge hucksters like Kudlow on TV anymore.

When the hosts of "Morning Joe" don't push back against Kudlow's fantasies, the viewers may never learn that Kudlow is wrong, just like when Lauer refuses to push back against Trump for lying about his position on the Iraq War.

Lauer's moderation left a lot to be desired during the Commander-in-Chief candidates forum last week, but it wasn't any worse than what goes on day in and day out during interviews on any of the corporate 24-hour news networks.

It's time that the media start challenging so-called "experts" like Kudlow, especially when the expert is simply trying to re-write US history to tell a story that fits within his or her own billionaire-funded ideology.