

Piñata Rick Perry hanging at risk Courage may cost him race

By Michael Graham | Friday, September 9, 2011 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Op-Ed

Confessions of a complete political geek: Wednesday, when Rick Perry called Social Security a “Ponzi scheme” for the *second* (!) time, I literally cried out in joy.

Sad, I know.

But that’s how excited I was to finally hear a politician tell the obvious truth that every American with fourth-grade math skills already knows: Social Security is an inter-generational rip-off that cannot last.

And after all these years of being yelled at, shouted down and/or being accused of wanting to choke granny to death with her own Alpo — I got to see the front-runner for a major party’s presidential nomination stand on national television and tell Americans the truth.

It may have been the stupidest move in political debate history, but I absolutely *loved* it.

More on Perry’s political stupidity in a moment. But first, let’s just revel in that rarest of commodities, honesty from a politician.

“It is a Ponzi scheme for these young people,” Perry said. “. . . It is a monstrous lie on this generation, and we can’t do that to them.”

And how are Perry’s critics attempting to rebut him? Lying, mostly. Many are like Ruth Marcus in The Washington Post, claiming that Social Security is fine because even after the “surplus” is exhausted, “the system could continue to pay out more than three-fourths of promised benefits” when people my age retire.

Only one problem. *There is no surplus*. Dig around in Al Gore’s lockbox and all you’ll find are IOUs from one federal agency to another. As Perry points out, Social Security is a “pay as you go” program in which 30-year-olds today write checks for 70-year-olds, on the assumption that kids being born now will do the same for them one day.

Which brings us to the other problem, pointed out by Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute yesterday:

“In 1950, there were 16 workers paying taxes into the system for every retiree who was taking benefits. . . By the time the baby boomers retire, there will be just two workers who will have to pay all the taxes to support every one retiree.”

Do you really think that when 2040 rolls around, those two workers — struggling to pay their bills and maybe afford some kids of their own — are going to willingly take on a needy senior as an economic roommate? Good luck with that.

That’s why Tanner says Social Security is actually worse than a Ponzi scheme because we don’t choose to hand over our money. Young workers today are forced into the bottom level of this failing pyramid.



Photo by Picasa

Which is why, on behalf of America's under-40 crowd, I say "Bravo, Perry!"

But as a former GOP political consultant, I say, "Are you out of your tiny Texas mind?"

Within minutes of Perry's statement, **Mitt Romney** sent out an attack e-mail headlined "Perry Does Not Believe Social Security Should Exist." Romney is happy to demagogue like a Democrat on this issue (one of the many things Mitt does like a Dem).

And if Perry survives the primary, Team Obama will dump millions on ads scaring seniors into believing that Perry wants to starve them out of their homes and into formaldehyde-filled trailers in abandoned FEMA camps.

Think I'm exaggerating? One liberal group already ran an ad about the GOP Medicare reforms in which a grandmother is thrown from her wheelchair and off a cliff.

Rick Perry has made a bold bet. He's betting that this is a serious moment in American history and the American people are serious-minded enough to see past the scare tactics and do the right thing.

As much as I admire him for it, I'm not sure I would take that bet.

Michael Graham hosts an afternoon drive-time talk show on 96.9 **WTKK**.

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