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Murdock: More Ryan, less Rove, please

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There is little silver lining in the pitch-black funnel cloud that is ObamaCare, now the law of the land. For the American Right, this grim occasion offers an opportunity to praise a rising star and excoriate another so-called Republican who deserves significant blame for this severe blow to limited government.

Paul Ryan, take a bow.

Karl Rove, go eat a cactus.

Throughout the seemingly ceaseless healthcare debate, GOP Rep. Paul Ryan of Wisconsin displayed quick wit, clarity of expression, and commitment to limited government -- the precise characteristics that escaped so many Republican leaders during the Bush-Rove-Hastert-Frist years of "Compassionate Conservatism."

Ryan, 40, is chief Republican on the House Budget Committee, where he highlighted ObamaCare's pitfalls. He did so most dramatically by confronting President Barack Obama at the Feb. 25 bipartisan summit at Blair House. Chiding ObamaCare's Enron accounting, Ryan said, "Hiding spending does not reduce spending. And so, when you take a look at all of this, it just doesn't add up."

Ryan may have been the youngest policymaker at the table and surely was its most youthful -- not bad in a party stereotyped as the home of wizened, bald men. Nonetheless, Ryan spoke his free-market truth to Obama's socialist power. Ryan emerged as a well-spoken brainiac who pierced the Democrats' illusion that Uncle Sam magically can buy 30 million people health insurance at a \$2.5 trillion, 10-year operating cost while simultaneously slashing the federal deficit.

As ObamaCare faces vigorous challenges in the courts and a rendezvous with enraged voters on Election Day, Ryan has yet more to offer. Among many prescriptions, Ryan's Roadmap for America's Future wisely would introduce a five-year spending freeze, 10-percent and 25-percent income tax rates, and voucherize much of Medicare and Medicaid.

Save for his unfortunate vote for the federal bank bailout in fall 2008, this ascendant figure in American public life should inspire conservatives and free-marketters to ask in moments of crisis: "What would Paul Ryan do?"

Conversely, on such occasions, Rightists should ask, "What would Karl Rove do?" -- And then dash the other way.

Rove, 59, is on Fox News so often, he must live there. He occupies priceless column inches in every Thursday Wall Street Journal. His spherical face mars the cover of his recently published door-stopper. His advice is as ubiquitous as dust.

Yet a genuine mystery endures: Why does anyone listen to a syllable this man utters?

"The architect," as George W. Bush called him, designed a skyscraper that supposedly would house, in Rove's words, a "durable governing majority." But, like earthquake victims crawling from the wreckage of Rove's "architecture," free-marketters were wounded by fleeting GOP control of Congress and the executive branch. Republicans now do not govern while in the minority.



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Rove whispered in Bush's ear that if only Republicans impersonated Democrats, salvation would follow. While applauding tax cuts, Rightists otherwise derided steel tariffs, farm bailouts, highway boondoggles, the Medicare drug entitlement, No Child Left Behind, and no pork left behind: As Citizens Against Government Waste reports, earmarks exploded from 4,326 under President Clinton in 2000 to 13,997 under Bush in 2005.

Average, inflation-adjusted annual spending, according to the Cato Institute's Chris Edwards, more than tripled, from 1.5 percent under Clinton to 4.9 percent under Bush. Even subtracting the War on Terror, homeland security, defense spending, and Katrina recovery, spending growth still averaged 4.2 percent annually, well ahead of that period's 2.8 percent average inflation rate.

The GOP's reputation for fiscal discipline was crushed beneath the porcine weight of Rove's "Compassion." Voters fired the GOP Congress in 2006, which ushered in Obama's victory in 2008 and the Left's triumphant achievement of government medicine in 2010.

Thanks, Karl.

Heeding Rove's counsel is like taking sailing lessons from the captain of the Titanic. Rove should mimic his old boss' merciful example and return to Texas for a life of quiet, obscure solitude.

The Right should lift Ryan on its shoulders and kick Karl to the curb.

(Deroy Murdock is a columnist with Scripps Howard News Service and a media fellow with the Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace at Stanford University. E-mail him at deroy.Murdock(at)gmail.com.)

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