

Obama's Shameless Twitter Town Hall

At his July 6 Twitter town hall meeting, Obama did not fail to disappoint those of us who expected demagoguery, dishonesty, and deception—along with long-winded non-answers. Little was surprising, except for one revealing response: Obama said, “We will have to make tough decisions about defense spending, *or even on programs that I like.*” [Emphasis added.] Obama, whose primary job as commander-in-chief is to protect the citizens of the United States, does not like defense programs. Granted, most reasonable people already knew that Obama, like Bill Clinton, “loathes the military,” but few perhaps expected him to be so blunt about it. (There is a reason he relies on a TelePrompTer: he occasionally blurts out his own thoughts when he does not.)

Obama responds to a question about the federal deficit: “Never in our history has the United States defaulted on its debt. The debt ceiling should not be something that is used as a gun against the heads of the American people to extract tax breaks for corporate jet owners, for oil and gas companies that are making billions of dollars because the price of gasoline has gone up so high. I mean, I’m happy to have those debates. I think the American people are on my side on this.”

Obama criticizes everyone else for over-the-top rhetoric, but then uses it himself in charging that Republicans are putting a “gun against the heads of the American people” because they prefer spending cuts to tax increases. As far as the American people being “on his side,” Obama is grossly mistaken. The vast majority of Americans want spending cuts and prefer no increase in the debt limit. It goes without saying, of course, that no Republicans are suggesting that the nation default on its debt obligations—but that does not stop Obama from implying that they are.

Obama continues: “If the wealthiest among us—and I include myself in this category—are willing to give up a little bit more, then we can solve this problem. It does not take a lot... when people say, you know, ‘job-killing tax increases, that’s what Obama’s proposing,’ we’re not going to. You’re entitled to your own opinions, but not your own facts. And the facts are that a modest increase for wealthy individuals is not shown to have an adverse impact on job growth.”

All tax increases of course have an impact on job growth because every dollar confiscated by the government is a dollar not spent in the private economy. But even if one accepts Obama’s premise that a “modest” tax increase has no negative impact on jobs, it would also have no impact on reducing the federal deficit! He cannot have it both ways. A small tax increase will do nothing to address the disastrous deficit, while a large tax increase will cause the loss of more jobs—and would still not balance the budget.

Obama is lying with the statement that if “the wealthiest among us ...give up a little bit more, then we can solve this problem.” That is absurd. The federal deficit is about \$1.65 *trillion*. If the wealthiest one percent of Americans—who already pay about 40 percent of the income tax collected by the government—were taxed at a full 100 percent the deficit would still be hundreds of billions of dollars. If giving up *everything* will not solve the

problem, then giving up “a little bit more” is meaningless. Obama is lying. He knows that raising taxes on the wealthy will not solve the deficit problem. He knows that facts will not get him reelected but thinks class warfare will, and he thinks that because he believes most voters are stupid and knows the media will not challenge his lies.)

Obama says, “We can test the two theories. You had what happened during the ‘90s. Right? Taxes for wealthy individuals were somewhat higher, businesses boomed, the economy boomed, great job growth; and then the 2000s, when taxes were cut on wealthy individuals, jobs didn’t grow as fast, businesses didn’t grow as fast. I mean, it’s not like we haven’t tried what these other folks are pitching. It didn’t work. And we should go with what works.”

Obama leaves out several important facts. First, the “somewhat higher” tax rates of the 1990s would not be enough to balance the 2011 budget. Second, there was no 9/11 terrorist attack in the 1990s to cause a recession. Third, after tax rates were cut during the Bush administration there *was* significant job growth. Fourth—and most importantly—federal spending in the 1990s, as a percentage of Gross Domestic Product, was nowhere near the level to which it was taken by Obama and the Democrat-controlled Congress in 2009 and 2010. The federal government, under the Obama administration, has collected far more in annual tax revenues than it did during the Clinton administration. *The cause of the massive federal deficits has been massive spending, not inadequate tax revenues.* Obama is incorrect. The truth is that the nation has *not* in fact “tried what these other folks are pitching.” They are “pitching” a program of “cut, cap, and balance,” meaning drastic cuts to federal spending, caps on future spending, and a balanced budget amendment to the U.S. Constitution. For Obama to claim, “It’s not like we haven’t tried” that before is a monumental deception. He can get away with it because the media let him.

“What I’m hoping to see over the next couple of weeks,” continues Obama, “is [for] people [to] put their dogmas aside, their sacred cows aside, they come together and they say, here’s a sensible approach that reduces our deficit, make sure that government’s spending within its means, but also continues to make investments in education, in clean energy and basic research that are going to preserve our competitive advantage going forward.”

Obama has of course been dogmatic throughout the deficit debate. He has agreed to only minimal spending cuts, demands tax increases, and refuses to consider a balanced budget amendment. Obama has a lengthy list of his own sacred cows, yet has the audacity to criticize others for giving priority to spending cuts over tax increases. Obama employs the technique that was perfected by Bill Clinton: Obama excoriates his opposition for doing what he himself has been doing, and then pretends to be the wise and impartial arbiter who saves the day at the last minute. Obama and Clinton are expert at the con. Many people see through it, but few in the media challenge them because they are ideologically in agreement with them.

Obama also here employs the false choice trick, suggesting that the only alternatives in the debate are between higher taxes and cuts in education, energy, and research. Those are certainly not the only alternatives, but Obama pretends that they are in order to portray the Republicans as evil people who would fire all teachers and end all research into life-saving medicines.

One of the “Tweets” to Obama is from House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH). (Clearly Boehner’s question is included only to give Obama an opportunity to criticize him.) Boehner asks where the jobs are, and Obama responds, “John’s the Speaker of the House, he’s a Republican, and so this is a slightly skewed question. But what he’s right about is that we have not seen fast enough job growth relative to the need. We’ve been able to cooperate with the Republicans on a range of these issues. There are some areas where the Republicans have been more resistant in cooperating, even though I think most objective observers think it’s the right thing to do. But I’m just going to keep on trying. And eventually, I’m sure the Speaker will see the light.”

Obama is unable to answer the question directly because 15 million Americans are still looking for jobs. All Obama can do is hurl accusations. “Where are the jobs?” is not a “slightly skewed question,” it is a direct question that warrants an answer. Obama accuses the Republicans of being resistant to cooperate—which means they refuse to give Obama all the tax increases and spending increases he wants. Obama does not state what those issues of disagreement are, he merely declares that “most objective observers” agree with him. Obama believes he is right and everyone else is wrong, and those pesky voters need not be bothered with the details.

The event was “classic Obama.” That he gets away with these performances and still has an approval rating in the mid-40 percent range is proof of Lincoln’s axiom, “You can fool some of the people all of the time...”

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