

Social Security: Some Birthday -- or Bash

Written by Alex Baer

Tuesday, 31 January 2012 22:47 - Last Updated Tuesday, 31 January 2012 22:48

It was for \$22.54, that first Social Security check, issued 72 years ago today -- January 31, 1940 -- to Ida May Fuller. It was check number 00-000-001. It was a long time ago, as time is reckoned here.

Some anniversary, some birthday. Leave it to Republicans, it'll be a "Birthday Bash," all right -- just leave out the "Birthday."

If Republicans have their way, the agency will become a privatized corporation. Those of us who have experienced less-than-humane treatment at the hands of health insurance companies, for example, those beacons of private, for-profit enterprises, know that profit must, will, and does occur no matter what -- no matter who's hurt.

Health insurance companies, of course, get to make piles and heaps of money every time they say, "No, that's not covered," or, "No, you cannot have that treatment," or, just simply, "No."

Damned peculiar how it's fine for corporations to come between you and your doctor, but any attempt by government -- the sole and only force between corporate rape and pillage and the people -- to direct traffic around horrible accidents of history, is, well, the government getting between you and your doctor.

Why, of course it is. □ The Earth's still flat, too. □ Just look for yourself.

Republicans say "No!" very well -- they have had years of practice, in Congress, to any good or decent idea ever raised for the good of the everyday person.

You might as well try to argue with a hall door, or shout into an empty closet, except that Republicans wouldn't be seen in anything so pedestrian and declassé.

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Republicans, owned outright by corporations and the privileged few, wouldn't be caught dead in anything less than an antique armoire or chifferobe valued at \$50-thousand, to start.

No self-respecting Republican skeletons would curl up in a closet costing any less than that.

You kiddin' me? □ Hey, these yahoos have neckties that cost more than your car!

Mitt and Newt, of course, think privatizing Social Security is a dandy idea, just grand -- what a party! They can hardly wait for their buddies, the Wall Street vultures, to pick the lock on that last grand stash of American cash, and start taking it all out for a spin on the country's economic roller coasters.

And, yes, that would be the same coaster we were all encouraged to let our 401ks ride, all the way to the top -- except that they blew up and, just like cartoons, we're left holding the mess, covered in soot and still smoldering, shock lines radiating out from the blast, where the long-fused bomb was, the one lit, long distance, from the boardrooms and spas, from the money-drugged opium den investment houses lining Wall Street.

Privatize it? Why, sure, absolutely! The name of the game is to steal absolutely everything not nailed down -- then go back for the nails. Why steal a little, from here or from there? All bets are off, there are no restraints any more, no shame to hold them back.

Only chumps and fools leave money on the table, after all.

So, privatize, huh? It seems prudent to again ask: You sure you wanna do that? How about something with at least a faint chance for you to keep some of your cash -- three-card Monte, maybe, or roulette, or some craps?

Next time you hear a Republican in high dudgeon about the desperate need for a "fix" to Social Security, just remember the desperate "fix" is for themselves, mainlining injectable cash, the

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only sort of fix junkies like this understand.

Remember: Social Security is fine until at least 2038 -- unless we let loose Republican mitts all over the pile, unless we let little newts scurry around in the stacks.

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There is a payroll tax extension in the works. As much as most working people could use that extra bit each week -- \$1500 on average, about \$29 a week, up to President Obama's recently rhetorical \$40 a week -- it sends the wrong message.

It says we can skimp here, so we can benefit from skimping over there.

The White House web site hammers the point that there will be negligible-to-no harm to Social Security. This means -- what, exactly? When things get a little tight, it's fine to have the appearances of shorting Social Security for a while?

How can that possibly help any message of sanity, reality, compassion?

That the extension is linked to the emergency unemployment means it must pass, but it would be best and fairest to break these out separately -- which is why that is not done.

Apples and ocelots, jaguars and kumquats: What a marketing ploy, what a package! Remember when "doing the marketing" meant picking up some groceries? Maybe it still does, just in a whole, new way.

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You want to contribute some sanity into the works, create an infusion to remove any financial doubts, just knock off the Social Security income cap, the one that now goes up to \$106,800, then stalls out and stops.

Income over this limit? Not a penny of it will go to Social Security, not a cent will be touched. *And the zillionaires danced.*

The AARP -- a group arguably favorable to seniors -- says raising the current ceiling to \$140,000 would rid the the system of 43% of its financial challenges ahead. Others observe, if you remove the cap entirely, you'd solve 93% of the problem, you'd blast it to bits.

Conservative think tanks argue the tax limit was put in place to keep from having to cut monster checks every month to the Gateses and Buffetts.

Easy enough to fix with the Buffett rule snapped into place: Just make sure zillionaires are taxed at the same rates as their staff.

So, when those checks go out, just make sure to drag back a third -- and a third everywhere else, too, on everything, clear across the board, on every single flow, and keep dragging.

If Republicans think a third is too much, we can always go back to talking about 94%, like during World War Two.

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Wonder what our forebears would have thought of the fiscal insanity and skullduggery of slashing taxes during times of horrible, horrid, and horribly expensive times of war, such as we've had? □ Think they'd suggest we'd been taken over by treachery and turncoats?

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It may well be true, that the U.S. has had too much wealth for too long -- we squander it in misadventures everywhere, making pains of ourselves and being Grim Reapers wherever we go.

The same is exactly true of Republicans -- too much wealth for too long, spent like water making trouble on all fronts, royal pains in the Reaper, so to speak, wherever they go.

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Sudden suggestions of fairness must be shocking for so many who have been so scot-free, for so long, for those riding so high, and for so long, their feet touch only sky.

Time to pop some balloons, of the One Percent, of the corporations, the rich, the privileged few who stole so much from so many -- not just cash, but hope and dignity, too.

You'll remember these are the people who gambled with our lives at every turn, who were never reluctant to pop any of our balloons -- they often did so, whenever they liked, for whatever reason, for sport, and all at once, too.

There is no record of any of them holding any grave, overly-concerned conversations regarding how many of our balloons had been popped, how many of us had fallen, nor how far, nor how fast -- no inquiries or questions regarding how many'd been hurt, or how many'd fallen through the cracks they'd kept making wider.

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*For a jolt of perspective, check out the historical tax rate tables here:
<http://www.taxpolicycenter.org/taxfacts/displayafact.cfm?Docid=213>*

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