Diction

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The Betrayal of Fiscal Conservatism

lower levels of public spending

David Leonhardt JAN. 9, 2017

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The label of "fiscal conservative" used to mean something.

opposite of Democrat

It referred to people — mostly Republicans — whose top priority was the health of the federal government's balance sheet. They favored a small deficit, or no deficit at all.

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They generally preferred holding down the deficit through a small government, but they were also open to tax increases to bring down the deficit. The first President George Bush and President Dwight Eisenhower were both fiscal conservatives.

Today, however, the original meaning of the label has been all but destroyed.

Few if any current Republican leaders care deeply about the deficit. Their top priority is instead reducing taxes on the affluent. If they can't find budget cuts to match their tax cuts — especially because many budget cuts are unpopular with

why reduce taxes on the rich when they have all the money

voters — today's top Republicans will instead cut taxes anyway and allow the deficit to grow. As Dick Cheney said, "Reagan proved deficits don't matter." Why would you want the poor ppl to grow

Just look at the initial moves by the Republican Congress. Paul Krugman's column today notes that the new Republican budget resolution would add $9 trillion in debt over the next decade. That budget, of course, comes from many of the same politicians who spent years complaining that President Obama didn't care about the deficit. He did can't get anything done because of his ethnicity

Krugman writes: "All that posturing about the deficit was obvious flimflam, whose purpose was to hobble a Democratic president, and it was completely predictable that the pretense of being fiscally responsible would be dropped as soon as the G.O.P. regained the White House." We got a Black Democratic president two.

The original meaning of "fiscal conservative" may be gone. In fact, Democrats have had a better claim on the label in recent years than Republicans. But it's important to remember that the concept is as legitimate as ever. The United States does indeed face a long-term budget deficit that eventually will require a solution, and cuts to government spending almost certainly need to be part of that solution.

So the next time that you hear a politician describe himself or herself as a "fiscal conservative," I recommend deep skepticism. But I also hope that Washington one day has more real fiscal conservatives than it does today.

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