



MY VIEW: JOHN F. ANDREWS

Saving Privatizer Ryan

What do you get when you combine denial with annihilation? Denihilation, a hybrid that seems ominously apt for today's GOP and the danger it poses for America's body politic.

One might have expected a prudent party to learn something from the rejection its harsh platform experienced in November. But despite signs that reassessments are occurring on topics such as immigration, little soul-searching appears to be under way with respect to fiscal policy and related issues. A defeated but unreconstructed vice presidential nominee is once again in a reactionary House's limelight, and he is doubling down on recommendations that would eviscerate practically every government operation but the military, supplant a long-overdue reform of our health care system with woefully inadequate vouchers for private coverage, and bestow extravagant benefits on the corporations and deep-pocketed individuals who stand to profit the most from his efforts.

Among the casualties of U.S. Rep. Paul Ryan's latest budget would be initiatives designed to upgrade our country's peril-

ously obsolescent infrastructure, support scientific research and innovative technology, encourage reliable public education, ensure well-compensated employment and stable retirement benefits, and maintain regulatory safeguards for investors, property owners and consumers of every description.

Whether Privatizer Ryan's drastic cuts in federal expenditures, as well as the new gratuities he'd lavish on plutocratic "job-creators," would really address the deficit that he and his allies profess to be concerned about is anything but clear. His plan is blithely short on detail, and those who endorse it tend to be the same hypocritical bloviators who applauded as Bush and Cheney squandered several years of Clinton-era surpluses, amassed colossal debts with two unfunded wars and crippled our economy with unsustainable tax breaks for those who needed them least.

What can be affirmed is that Ryan's priorities, if implemented, would exacerbate the gaping income disparities that lie at the root of our most intractable problems. They'd permit bankers to continue the abuses that gutted America's

middle class, brought poverty back to Depression-era levels and threatened to obliterate the global finance structure. They would undermine our pledge to uphold liberty and justice for all. And they'd cement our dependence on energy strategies that degrade the environment, deplete the resources on which we all rely, accelerating the climate changes that Republicans still refuse to acknowledge despite their mounting toll on every region of the planet.

At the moment, it's hard to see what can deter today's "Party of No" from finishing off what remains of a once-noble heritage. It's even harder to see what can shield the rest of us from ideological die-hards who appear hellbent on reducing our vulnerable nation to a state of paralysis.

We can only hope they'll recall their better angels and reclaim the legacy we have long associated with such legendary stewards as Abraham Lincoln, Theodore Roosevelt and Dwight D. Eisenhower.

John F. Andrews is a Santa Fean whose publications include articles in The Atlantic and The New York Times about the Civil War as a Shakespearean tragedy.