

Taxing the Truth

by Dan Jacoby

Steve Forbes was on television this morning, accusing Howard Dean of wanting to raise taxes on the middle class by \$1,900 each. He knows that's a lie. And George W. Bush knows it's a lie too. At least, he should.

George W. Bush claims that the Republican tax cuts saved the "average American" \$1,900 each. This is a prime example of what a former presidential candidate liked to call "fuzzy math". What's the truth? If one very, very rich person gets \$100,000, and fifty "average Americans" get nothing, the average is just over \$1,900 each. Of course, fifty out of fifty-one get nothing.

And that's basically what George W. Bush and the Republicans did. They gave a lot of money to the very rich, practically nothing to the middle and lower classes (the true "average Americans"), and claimed to give a lot to everyone.

The truth is, if you're a middle class American, the Republicans won't cut your taxes, and Howard Dean and the Democrats won't raise them. And anyone who says otherwise, be he George W. Bush or Steve Forbes (have you noticed how rich these guys are?), or any other rich Republican, is lying. Bill Clinton raised taxes on the rich – and only the rich. He then cut taxes for many groups of middle class Americans. Ronald Reagan, on the other hand, gave us the largest tax increase since World War II, and he socked it to the lower and middle classes.

What's the result of years of Republican lying on taxes? We have a half-trillion dollar budget deficit that won't go away. We have a half-trillion dollar trade deficit that won't go away. We have a dollar that is hitting long-time lows against other currencies. We've lost two and a half million jobs over the past three years – the worst performance since the start of the Great Depression. Interest rates are on the verge of rising, which will burst the housing bubble and choke off what little economic recovery we have.

Now, the horror story: The bills come due. All that borrowing means all that interest. Interest payments will eat up the budget. There won't be money available to maintain our roads, fund our schools, and supply our military. The agencies charged with ensuring safe workplaces and clean drinking water will be dismantled. Children will be denied basic education. We won't have the resources to compete in the world marketplace, or on the battlefield. America will become weak and vulnerable.

Will this all happen? It almost certainly will not. Eventually, Americans wake up to reality. At some point, the Republicans will be thrown out of office, as they were in 1992, and the Democrats will clean up the mess. The question is, how soon will we wake up? How soon will we stop believing the lies? How soon will we demand that our politicians stop pandering to our greed and our fears?

How soon will we elect a President who tells the truth?