Paul Ryan -- The GOP Latest Fraud

Paul Ryan is one of the great intellectual and political frauds of our time. You don't need to do much more than read through Paul Krugman's and Jonathan Chait's work eviscerating his budget proposal, which carries the Orwellian name of "Pathway to Prosperity." But Legal Planet readers should be aware of something else.

If there is one place where progressives and conservatives usually can agree, it is on the issue of farm subsidies, which are not only grotesquely wasteful but also destructive to the environment. Fertilizer runoff pollutes water, aquifers go dry from overuse, and they encourage incredible energy use as well. So one might think that at least we might get a silver lining from the plan with an attack on subsidies. After all, Ryan is supposed to be a fearless and "serious" budget cutter and policy wonk, right?

Well, no. After reading the document, David Frum, who is fighting a lonely battle to bring conservatism back to sanity, wonders,

> Why is agriculture treated so lightly — $30 billion in savings over 10 years, all of them (interestingly) to be decided by the Agriculture Committee, a unique concession by a Budget Committee otherwise determined to centralize decision-making?

Here we have a supposed "serious" deficit hawk letting off the most wasteful and inefficient expenditure in the budget. After all, you can bet that a Ryan-inspired Agriculture Committee will find most its "savings" from Food Stamps. What's going on? For Frum, a long-time Republican insider and genuine conservative, the answer is obvious: "Farmers vote Republican. Medicaid recipients do not."

So the worst budget proposal in decades not only enriches the super-wealthy at the expense of the poor and middle class, and relies upon budget voodoo, but also makes sure to do what it can to destroy the planet. As Chait notes, Ryan's monster "contains so many bad Republican economic proposals in one place you don't even know what to say about it."

That anyone could have thought this plan was a "serious" proposal says truly frightening things about our national politics or the press. Or both.