

## Editorial

# Mr. Ryan's Cramped Vision

Mitt Romney's safe and squishy campaign just took on a much harder edge. A candidate of no details — I'll cut the budget but no need to explain just how — has named a vice-presidential running mate, Paul Ryan, whose vision is filled with endless columns of minus signs. Voters will now be able to see with painful clarity just what the Republican Party has in store for them.

As House Budget Committee chairman, Mr. Ryan has drawn a blueprint of a government that will be absent when people need it the most. It will not be there when the unemployed need job training, or when a struggling student needs help to get into college. It will not be there when a miner needs more than a hardhat for protection, or when a city is unable to replace a crumbling bridge.

And it will be silent when the elderly cannot keep up with the costs of M.R.I.'s or prescription medicines, or when the poor and uninsured become increasingly sick through lack of preventive care.

More than three-fifths of the cuts proposed by Mr. Ryan, and eagerly accepted by the Tea Party-driven House, come from programs for low-income Americans. That means billions of dollars lost for job training for the displaced, Pell grants for students and food stamps for the hungry. These cuts are so severe that the nation's Catholic bishops raised their voices in protest at the shredding of the nation's moral obligations.

Mr. Ryan's budget "will hurt hungry children, poor families, vulnerable seniors and workers who cannot find employment," the bishops wrote in an April letter to the House. "These cuts are unjustified and wrong."

Mr. Ryan responded that he was helping the poor by eliminating their dependence on the government. And yet he has failed to explain how he would make them self-sufficient — how, in fact, a radical transformation of government would magically turn around an economy that is starving for assistance. At a time when state and local government layoffs are the principal factor in unemployment, the Ryan budget would cut aid to desperate governments by at least 20 percent, far below historical levels, on top of other cuts to mass transit and highway spending.

Those are the kinds of reductions voters of all income levels would actually feel. People might nod their heads at Mr. Romney's nostrums of smaller government, but they are likely to feel quite different when

they realize Mr. Ryan plans to take away their new sewage treatment plant, the asphalt for their streets, and the replacements for retiring police officers and firefighters.

All of this will be accompanied, of course, by even greater tax giveaways to the rich, and extravagant benefits to powerful military contractors. Business leaders will be granted their wish for severely diminished watchdogs over the environment, mine safety and food quality.

Mr. Romney had already praised the Ryan budget as “excellent work,” but until Saturday the deliberate ambiguity of his own plans gave him a little room for distance, an opportunity to sketch out a more humane vision of government’s role. By putting Mr. Ryan’s callousness on his ticket, he may have lost that chance.

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