

Truth on taxes? Not this year

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Barack Obama is a liar. So is Hillary Clinton. Both of them said during the Pennsylvania debate Wednesday that they wouldn't raise taxes on people earning less than \$250,000 a year.

They're lying, and they know it. They're going to have to raise taxes on middle-income taxpayers. It's going to take a lot more than that to keep this nation standing proud and true. Anyone who says otherwise is a liar. Yes, John McCain and all you no-tax-increase Republicans, I'm talking to you, too.

It's time that Americans acknowledged the inevitable. The end is not as far off as your pandering politicians would have you believe. The ticking debt clock is nearing detonation. Some say it's still not too late to keep it from blowing the economy to smithereens. I'm not convinced that wasting the past 20 years wasn't decisive. **But there are those - such as the Concord Coalition's Harry Zeeve, who spoke to the Economic Forum of Palm Beach County on Thursday - who believe that something still can be done.**

Mr. Zeeve suggested that it'll take some effort, but not just on the part of politicians. It will take effort from Americans, Americans with the gumption to tell politicians: "It's OK. Raise our taxes. Please."

At Wednesday's debate, ABC's George Stephanopoulos confronted the Democratic rivals with this quote about them from Sen. McCain: "They're going to raise your taxes by thousands of dollars a year, and they have the audacity to hope you don't mind."

In this day and age, them's fighting words. "Am not," came the chorus from Sens. Clinton and Obama. Sen. Clinton said, "I am absolutely committed to not raising a single tax on middle-class Americans, people making less than \$250,000 a year." Sen. Obama went one better: "I not only have pledged not to raise their taxes, I've been the first candidate in this race to specifically say I would cut their taxes."

How dare they? Continuing to act as though tax increases and program cuts are not absolutely in our future may appeal to some Americans. For instance, those comments can't help but appeal to revolutionary types advocating America's collapse. Mainstream Americans, however, should be appalled.

The United States has got to increase revenues and decrease spending because the country has made promises - real promises, not campaign promises - it can't keep. Trillions of them.

I'm talking about the national debt, at \$9 trillion and rising. The people and countries that hold that debt may want to be repaid some day. I'm talking about interest on the debt, at \$238 billion a year - enough, Mr. Zeeve said, to pay the cost of the Iraq war for two years, or to pay all the federal education, transportation and homeland security costs for a year, and still have \$100 billion left over.

I'm talking about Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid, those towering triumphs of social engineering, quivering under the load of too many retirees and not nearly enough young people to keep the system afloat. Right now, the nation has no plan to pay for these promises - other than to continue running up the national debt.

Twenty years from now, Mr. Zeeve says, those four costs - Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and interest on the national debt - will be all we can afford. There won't be money for education, transportation, homeland security or national defense. Those aren't Democratic numbers. They're not Republican numbers. They're numbers from a bipartisan organization, the Concord Coalition, that works with the conservative Heritage Foundation and the centrist Brookings Institution to spread the word.

Wake up, they say, and wake up your politicians to the reality of what's ahead. Call or write your favorite presidential candidate and tell him or her that it's OK to stop lying. We don't want to hear it anymore. We'd rather secure the nation's future, if that's not too much to ask of candidates for president.

So tell them that it's OK to talk about raising taxes if it means that we'll still be a powerful nation when our children are grown. Tell them to tell us the truth. Go ahead, America. It's OK. Give them permission to stop lying.