

Grover: You don't know marketing

Last night, I watched Steve Kroft on 60 Minutes attempt to get Grover Norquist to be thoughtful about his no taxes pledge. In case you don't know, Norquist, the founder of the misleadingly named "Americans for Tax Reform" is the reason the GOP will not vote for any tax increase regardless of anything.

I could say a lot about Norquist's smarmy demeanor, lack of ethics and sad attempts at humor, but I want to concentrate on one particular aspect of the interview. Norquist said that what American for Tax Reform is trying to accomplish is **to brand the Republican Party as the party of no taxes**. Here is the exchange, taken from CBS News/60 Minutes website:

Norquist claims he got the idea to brand the Republican Party as the party that would never raise your taxes, when he was just 12 years old and volunteering for the Nixon campaign. He says it came to him one day while he was riding home on the school bus.

Norquist: If the parties would brand themselves the way Coke and Pepsi and other products do so that you knew what you were buying, it had quality control. I vote for the Republican. He or she will not raise my taxes. I'll buy one. I'll take that one home.

Kroft: So this is about marketing?

Norquist: Yes. It's a part of that. Yeah, very much so.

But Norquist says the success of any product requires relentless monitoring and diligent quality control to protect the brand, whether it's Coca Cola or the Republican Party.

The problem with this scenario is that Norquist seems to think

that branding is achieved by threat. Basically, if a GOP candidate does not sign the no-taxes pledge, Norquist will fund his demise. The deal is that pols will sign the pledge and then get money for their campaigns. If they refuse to sign the pledge, American for Tax Reform will do everything it can to discredit them and will fund any opposing pol who does sign the pledge. Furthermore, if the pol votes for a tax increase after having signed the pledge (no matter how long ago), Norquist will work to make sure the pol loses his/her seat.

Norquist is *not* a marketer—he is a politician who is using power and money to influence (and some would say corrupt) the political process. To really “market” the GOP, Norquist would have to do some research. He would have to listen to the average citizen/consumer. He would have to explore what the GOP brand means to people inside and outside the GOP.

Finally, Norquist is not really trying to REFORM taxes or make them more equitable or fair. He is working to reduce the size of government, as this article in Politico points out.

Why not make the GOP the party of “we don’t want to be a part of government.” Many of us could support that.

Your thoughts?