WHY SHOULD WE BELIEVE THE FINE RHETORIC IN OBAMA'S INAUGURATION ADDRESS?

During Barack Obama's second inaugural address yesterday, many on the left were actually mentioning tears of joy, especially when it came to this passage quoted by AP via Yahoo:

> "We must make the hard choices to reduce the cost of health care and the size of our deficit. But we reject the belief that America must choose between caring for the generation that built this country and investing in the generation that will build its future," he said. "The commitments we make to each other – through Medicare, and Medicaid, and Social Security – these things do not sap our initiative; they strengthen us. They do not make us a nation of takers; they free us to take the risks that make this country great."

Despite Obama's slap-down here of Romney and Ryan's demonization of "takers" during the presidential campaign, Obama is contradicting his own record here. It is clear that he has been itching to cut Social Security and Medicare as one of his signature moves. Here is Matt Bai during the pitched battle of the fiscal cliff last month:

> None of this is theoretical or subjective. It's spelled out clearly in the confidential offers that the two sides exchanged at the time and that I obtained while writing about the negotiations last spring.
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> In his opening bid, after the rough

> framework of a grand bargain was reached, Mr. Boehner told the White House he wanted to cut $450 billion from Medicare and Medicaid in the next decade alone, with more cuts to follow. He also proposed raising the retirement age for Social Security and changing the formula to make benefits less generous.
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> Mr. Obama wasn't willing to go quite that far. But in his counteroffer a few days later, he agreed to squeeze $250 billion from Medicare in the next 10 years, with $800 billion more in the decade after that. He was willing to cut $110 billion more from Medicaid in the short term. And while Mr. Obama rejected raising the retirement age, he did acquiesce to changing the Social Security formula so that benefits would grow at a slower rate.

Also last month, Yves Smith and Bruce Bartlett appeared on Bill Moyers' show to discuss this point:

> **YVES SMITH**: Obama wants to cut entitlements. He said this in a famous dinner with George Will. I think it was even before he was inaugurated. He went and had dinner with a group—
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> **BRUCE BARTLETT**: That's right, a group of conservatives.
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> **YVES SMITH**: He met a group of conservatives. And he made it very clear at this dinner that as soon as the economy was stabilized that he wanted to cut Social Security, well "reform." But that's just code for "cut" Social Security and Medicare. Obama really believes that this will be a signature accomplishment of his. That he will go down in history positively for.
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> **BRUCE BARTLETT**: That's right. If you go back to 2011 and look at the deal Obama

> put on the table, he was willing to make vast, vast cuts in entitlement programs. And the Republicans walked away from it, which only goes to prove that they don't have the courage of their own convictions. But Yves point is exactly correct. Obama really is maybe to the right of Dwight Eisenhower and fiscally. And it's really at the root of so many of our economy's problems, because he didn't ask for a big enough stimulus. Has let the housing sector, basically, fester for four years without doing anything about it. He's really, you know, focused more on cutting the deficit than people imagine.

Once the tears of joy get wiped away over the beautiful words Obama delivered, it would be best to stand guard against his actions, which almost certainly will be the exact opposite. To believe this is true, all we have to do is look at the great signature moves from Obama's first inauguration. As Marcy pointed out yesterday, one of the first documents Obama signed the first time around was his executive order "closing" Guantanamo. This time, Gitmo is still open with no prospect of closing and one of Obama's first signatures was to nominate his drone czar as Director of the CIA.

Another of Obama's first signatures last time was on this executive order that purported to ensure "lawful interrogations". As I wrote back in 2010, much was made of Obama using the order to end the practice of the CIA using secret sites for detention of prisoners, but there was no parallel language ending the practice for JSOC. In my post yesterday, I noted how the JSOC's role in training those responsible for Afghanistan's detention program have failed to eliminate torture and ensure lawful interrogations. Not mentioned in yesterday's post is the fact that the UN report cited also notes that Afghanistan also maintains secret detention sites, just as Obama outlawed for CIA

but allowed to continue for JSOC.

I see no reason to get choked up over yesterday’s rhetoric from Obama. Instead, I’m going to keep a close eye on what he does.