

Health Care Battle Ends; War on Social Security Begins

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Drunk with success over their Health Care bill passing, the Democrats are now lusting after even greater conquests. With the celebratory hangover still aching, the Democrats lurch forward towards a hasty drive to “reform” Social Security.

The Social Security reform will no doubt resemble the health care reform, the details of which remain a mystery to most Americans. The essence of both policies will be based on one principle: reduce the debt of the United States by any means necessary.

Two articles in The New York Times confirmed that this was indeed the reasoning behind Obama’s health care bill. The first states:

“[the health care bill] signed Tuesday by Mr. Obama... squeeze[s] nearly a half-trillion dollars out of Medicare [500 billion dollars] in the next 10 years and establish[s] many demonstration projects to test innovative ways of delivering health care.”

The second half of the quote — “innovative ways of delivering health care” — is doublespeak for “health care rationing” (providing less), the basis of Obama’s health care plan.

This truth was revealed in the same article, when Obama’s new appointee to head Medicare and Medicaid, Dr. Donald Berwick, was discussed. The main qualification of Dr. Berwick is that he plans to, in his own words, “Over the next three years, reduce the total resource consumption of your health care system, no matter where you start, by 10 percent.”

A stark example of Dr. Berwick’s health care philosophy — rationing — is then given, applied to himself after he received a serious knee injury: “Doctors urged him to have a knee replacement operation several years ago, but he decided instead to have just a “steroid injection,” and the outcome has been fine, he said.” (March 28, 2010).

The head of Medicare and Medicaid will thus be advocating “injections” when “surgeries” are recommended, as well as a variety of other ways to ration health care. This key concept of Obama’s health care plan was what the health care corporations were really salivating over, and now the plan is to apply it to Social Security.

A separate New York Times article clearly explains how the rationing of health care and the “reforming” of Social Security are one and the same:

“Central to the health care changes are hundreds of billions of dollars in reductions in Medicare spending over time... As some administration officials acknowledge, that effectively takes those fast-growing entitlement programs off the table for deficit reduction just as Mr. Obama’s bipartisan commission to reduce the mounting national debt gets to work.

“That leaves Social Security, the other big entitlement benefits program and one that Mr. Obama has suggested in the past that he is willing to tackle. While its looming problems are not of the scale of those afflicting Medicare, it now stands as the likeliest source of the sort of large savings needed to bring projected annual deficits to sustainable levels, many budget analysts agree.” (March 23, 2010, emphasis added).

Doublespeak translation: “...large savings needed to bring projected annual deficits to sustainable levels” equals rationing or “reducing” Social Security benefits.

How will this happen? The article answers: “...packaging future reductions in the retirement program [Social Security] that Democrats zealously defend with tax increases that Republicans typically oppose would have the makings of a grand compromise to shrink the debt.”

The article also mentions “gradually rais[ing] the retirement age for future Social Security recipients” as a popular idea. These reductions are necessary because “...the promise of future reductions would immediately reassure global markets fretful that the United States’ debt is already its highest since World War II.”

There you have it. “Global markets,” i.e. rich investors, are demanding that the U.S. pay them back in full, not in inflated dollars. It is obvious that the Obama administration wants working people to pay this debt back, not Wall Street or the wealthy in general.

And the article says nothing about the fact that the rich have a sweet deal when it comes to paying into Social Security. The wages of ordinary working people are taxed at a rate of 6.2 percent for Social Security. But for the rich, they are not taxed at all on income over \$107,000, meaning that their overall Social Security tax rate is lower than everyone else’s. By removing the cap on how much they are taxed, a substantial amount of money would be raised for Social Security.

A working class solution to address the the nation’s problems must be fought for now! President of the AFL-CIO Richard Trumka offers a splendid vision: “The best way to fix the deficit is to create 10 million jobs now — the number of jobs needed to close our jobs deficit. This will require large amounts of public investment in the short term, which should be paid for in future years by taxing Wall Street. In addition to creating jobs for Main Street this tax will also curb short-term speculation and other Wall Street abuses that caused this recession.”

Well said. But excellent ideas without the necessary actions attached are meaningless. For labor to press their agenda, they must act independently of the Democrats. Lobbying congressmen with union money isn’t going to do the trick — not even close.

Labor can begin this time by taking back the streets. The Tea Party conservatives are exploiting labor’s inaction, and thus garnering some public support by their fake radicalism. Massive labor-led demonstrations, in Washington, DC, for example, will quiet the corporate-sponsored Tea Partiers, especially if Labor comes equipped with the above demands for job

creation and taxing Wall Street and the wealthy. The vast majority of working people would overwhelmingly support such demands, and a serious campaign to achieve them would change the face of the present corporate-dominated political scene. But time is of the essence. The corporations have their plans laid out and will push them into effect soon if they are not pushed back — hard!

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