

How Obama's Health Care "Reform" Kills Health Care

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It's difficult to understand a subject when those explaining it are motivated not by truth, but profit. In the case of health care, both Democrats and Republicans have huge financial incentives to obscure, mislead, or lie. Instead of common sense and honesty directing the debate, bags of money facilitate the conversation, funneled in from the health care industry via lobbyists into Congressmen's pockets. This is the real reason that Obama's "health care summit" was full of free-market jargon, staged debate and fake rage.

The majority of working people in this country are completely alienated from this nonsense, and are growing progressively hostile to the lies of both parties and their respective media mouthpieces. Polls continue to show rising opposition to the Democrats' health care shenanigans, while showing no upgrade in status for the Republicans.

The ability for millions of people to see through the muddle in Washington points to a larger distrust of the two-party system. Even as "progressive Democrats" and other liberal pundits bow before the health care industry by urging passage of "an imperfect" health care bill, workers, the poor and the elderly aren't taking the bait.

And why should they? The Democrats want millions of uninsured people to be mandated into buying crappy health insurance from the most hated companies in existence, where co-pays, premiums and other fees will prevent millions from benefiting from their new, shoddy health care. This individual mandate is reason enough to solidly reject Obama's health care scheme, but it's just the beginning.

The Democrats don't like to talk about how their health care vision slashes Medicare. The New York Times explains in detail how Obama's new plan attacks Medicare; here are some examples:

"President Obama's budget would make a down payment toward his goal of covering the uninsured, and he would pay for it in part by cutting federal payments [Medicare] to hospitals, insurance companies and drug companies."

Later, the article reads: “Mr. Obama said he would save \$176 billion over 10 years by cutting Medicare payments to health insurance companies that provide comprehensive care to more than 10 million of the 44 million Medicare beneficiaries.”

And: “Mr. Obama also proposed squeezing \$37 billion out of the [Medicare] payments to home health agencies over the next decade.” (February 26, 2010).

The article fails to connect these blandly stated numbers with the gigantic human suffering that will result. All that seems to matter is that the “uninsured will be [poorly] insured,” not that those currently receiving quality services will have their health care stripped from them.

Equally disastrous is the bi-partisan consensus over health care rationing. The Democrats plan aims to save billions of dollars by simply providing less health care. In fact, rationing health care is the philosophical backbone of the Democrats’ plan, which amounts to boosting the profits of health care corporations by allowing them to provide less service.

In Obama’s recently released plan, a large section is entitled “policies to crack down on waste, fraud and abuse.” The mainstream media and both political parties have made it abundantly clear that “waste” means “excessive tests and procedures that doctors routinely perform.” In essence, this means that the “new normal” for health care will be less tests and less procedures for those mandated to pay for corporate health care. Of course these measures will continue to be performed for those who can afford more expensive plans.

Contrary to the foolish accusations of the Republicans, the Democrats health care bill does not represent “the government takeover of health care,” but the corporate takeover. The fact that this corporate coup is being conducted through the hands of government only proves that both political parties are wholly owned by the corporations.

Federally run Medicare and state run Medicaid are being slashed, pushing soon-to-be mandated people into the corporate sphere, where services will be cut to push up profits.

Another way that the corporate takeover of health care will be achieved is through the tax on so called “Cadillac health care plans.” Employers will be taxed for offering their workers quality health care after a certain threshold; the worse the health care offered, the lower the tax. Labor unions correctly interpreted the tax to be an attack on their health care plans, since union workers typically have better health care plans than the unorganized.

Sadly, many labor leaders agreed not to fight this tax after Obama “compromised” by raising the tax threshold and delaying its implementation until 2018. But to think that such a tax can be ignored until 2018 is a perilous delusion. Employers will use every contract negotiation until 2018 to attack health care plans, so that the plans are below the threshold by the time the tax kicks in. Those employers without a unionized workforce will simply drop their health care plans and force their workers into the treacherous waters of Obama’s health care mandate.

Both political parties love this idea. And despite the Republicans furious playacting, they are giddy that the Democrats have adopted long held conservative Republican beliefs about health care. This is what the Wall Street Journal said about the health care summit:

“To listen to President Obama and his closest Democratic allies, you’d think John McCain had won the election and their bill had been drafted by Paul Ryan, Tom Coburn and the scholars at the American Enterprise Institute [a rightwing think tank].” (February 26, 2010).

The above-described dynamics will drastically alter the health care landscape in the U.S. The high standards of health care embodied in Medicare and union plans are being undermined, setting a much lower standard nationally. Once these plans are killed, the corporate vultures will swoop in with their “individual mandate” to make billions of dollars, while the threshold for “quality care” will be lowered drastically with the mass rationing of health care.

Anyone interested in saving health care must fight the Democrats’ plans, while demanding that Medicare be extended to everyone. To ensure that Medicare is financially sound, taxes on the wealthy and corporations must be raised, while the health care monopoly corporations should be nationalized and run as public utilities.

These ideas can be made a reality only through the united and organized effort of the Labor Movement, retiree organizations, community groups and anyone else interested in saving and extending real health care in the U.S.

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