

The Emerging Healthcare Sell-Out

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As the animal kingdom proves daily, it's extremely difficult to build consensus between predator and prey. The national debate over healthcare contains a similarly unbridgeable gap, this time along class lines.

One example of this is the recent departure of labor unions AFSCME and SEIU from the coalition Healthcare Reform Dialogue. This group is dominated by the very people who want to change nothing about the U.S. healthcare system: insurance companies, drug companies, and various mega-corporations.

As the group's dialogue shifted to the right, the unions realized that unless they leave, they'd be responsible for shaping a policy that benefits those already benefiting from a broken healthcare system.

This downward, rightward debate was on full display last week at the White House's highly-publicized healthcare forum, obviously influencing the ideas of Obama (whom the above unions fought and spent furiously to get into office).

Over the last week, Obama has backed off considerably from the plan elaborated in his presidential campaign — itself unimpressive and vague. Instead, he is open to "whatever works." What is apparent, however, is the emerging contradiction between what works for the healthcare industry versus the rest of us.

The mega-corporations of the healthcare industry and their hangers-on are responsible for the horrible state of U.S. healthcare, while blocking every attempt to improve it (healthcare lobbyists spent one billion in the last two years to influence government policy).

These people, rightfully despised by the majority of Americans, are being "brought to the table" to help shape the reform promised by the President. Their place at the table was most likely pre-paid for — from the \$19 million they contributed to Obama's presidential campaign. It's become obvious that, in order to achieve consensus with the healthcare oligarchy, the President will have to add water to his already-watered down proposal, while giving giant handouts to the healthcare industry.

The brainstorming session at the White House forum generated many ideas that would substantially benefit the healthcare tycoons. They've taken the idea of universal healthcare and turned it on its head.

For example, instead of providing healthcare, one prominent idea is that the government's role should be to simply require it. This idea assumes that people choose to be uninsured, and that everything would be fine if the law demanded it. This profound plan is based on

the profitable experience of legally requiring car insurance, which continues to make billions for insurance companies while denying millions of people the ability to drive. The healthcare industry is advocating the same plan, which would inevitably have similar results.

This obviously flawed idea stems from a deeper flaw in perspective: that if everybody had insurance, everything would be OK. This theory was destroyed by the film SICKO, which focused on Americans who actually had insurance, but were not taken care of when they became injured or ill.

The insurance companies realized long ago that their profits increased as their services decreased — the entire American healthcare industry revolves around similar concepts, each stemming from the profit motive that dominates corporate life. The Obama administration seems unwilling to address this vital issue and the devastating effect it continues to have on the broken healthcare system.

If Obama's healthcare plan leaves in place the same greedy shareholders and CEO's of the healthcare mega-corporations, while funneling them billions of taxpayer money, very little is likely to change. Likewise, if every American has health insurance, but insurance companies benefit from not paying for expensive surgeries or medications, or drug companies continue to benefit from having monopolies over medications, millions of people will continue to suffer.

Healthcare is a human right. Obama's attempt to leave this socially precious industry in the hands of greedy individuals motivated only by profit is unacceptable.

Nor is this what people voted for when Obama became president. Actual change in this case means providing citizens healthcare from the moment they are born until their death, not continuing the broken system of having to purchase healthcare from companies that provide poor — if any — services.

The majority of industrialized nations have concluded that government should provide healthcare, and the results speak for themselves. The nearly 50 million uninsured Americans — with the number skyrocketing as joblessness explodes — will not be so easily fooled by half-measures or sellouts.

The tiny, inadequate tax increases for the wealthy that Obama is proposing to help fund his healthcare reform is not "a step in the right direction," but an act that will continue to leave the rich and powerful in their places, while actually changing nothing.

A nationalized, single payer healthcare system, paid for by a real tax increase on the super-rich and mega-corporations and administered by hospital workers and medical professionals, is a solution that would drastically improve American society. Such a plan would be viciously opposed by the healthcare industry, while undoubtedly achieving broad consensus among the American working-class.

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