

# **The Sham and Shame of “Wealth Care” - Not Health Care**

by Gary Simpson

It's early July and that means members of the 115<sup>th</sup> Congress take an extended Independence Day break to give the American public some well deserved R & R. However, for Mitch McConnell, the Senate Majority leader from Kentucky, being the relentless old blood hound that he is, he'll continue to work at doggedly sniffing out his own favorite brand of R & R – “Repeal & Replace” (Obamacare, that is).

The sniffing (or sniveling) has been hot and heavy as of late. But, alas, even after all the feverish, closed door sessions with burning of the midnight oil, it became apparent at the 11<sup>th</sup> hour that even his partisan pals were not ready to throw the old dog a bone. His “gang of 13's” 0.2 version of the House's already repugnant American Health Care Act (AHCA) drew mixed reviews from the pack. Unable to chase down the votes needed to pass the Senate's Better Care Reconciliation Act of 2017 (BCRA) before the break, Senator McConnell hit the brakes and called off the dogs yet again.

For some, like his blue grass buddy, Rand Paul, the Senate bill still wasn't repugnant enough for his taste. "The current bill does not repeal Obamacare. It does not keep our promises to the American people. I will oppose it coming to the floor in its current form, but I remain open to negotiations," opined Paul.

For others like Maine's Susan Collins (who has actually been known to stretch her mind and conscience to reach across the aisle), it was way too foul to swallow. “For my part,” she stated in an ABC TV interview, “I'm very concerned about the cost of insurance for older people with serious chronic illnesses and the

impact of the Medicaid cuts on our state governments, the most vulnerable people in our society, and health care providers, such as our rural hospitals and nursing homes, most of whom are very dependent on the Medicaid program. So threading that needle is going to be extremely difficult.”

So, what’s an old dog to do once the pack returns to the pound except keep digging the same old dirt, barking up the same old tree and peddling the same old propaganda? In the “dog-eat-dog” world of partisan politics as legislators return to chew on this “bone of contention” erroneously dubbed “Health Care,” it is important for citizens to bone up on their knowledge of what this quest to repeal and replace Obamacare is truly all about. It has nothing to do with “Health Care” for the masses. It has everything to do with “Wealth Care” (a.k.a. tax breaks) for the affluent few, insurance companies and big pharmaceutical firms. So just like in The Wizard of Oz, let’s pull the curtain back and get real.

The “honest-to-goodness-so-help-me-God” truth is that neither Senate nor House version of this draconian exercise to redistribute wealth from the poorest and sickest to the most privileged and well heeled Americans has an honest, honorable or just leg to stand on. Taken together or separately, they are a moral abomination, a shameful sham fraudulently fashioned in the back alleys and greedy gutters of partisan politics.

Let’s be brutally blunt and excruciatingly honest. Voting in favor of either version of these bills is tantamount to blindfolding innocent Americans, lining them up, firing at will and then looting their pockets and turning over the spoils to the few wealthiest and healthiest private citizens and corporations in the land. If this is how party-line politicians choose to lead America in order to maintain power and privilege for the few on the backs of the poor and ailing, then we as a nation are infected with a malignant moral malaise that no health care plan can rightly address.

According to the report released from the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office just days in advance of the scheduled vote, passage of the bill means 22-23 million Americans lose health care coverage over the next decade. Older and sicker people with coverage are forced to pay more while the richest top 1 percent see an average tax cut of \$45,000 per year. The richest .01 percent save \$250,000!

**This is what the ill-named “health care plan” that the Senate majority party has prescribed to supposedly cure the nation’s health care woes actually does.** It allows insurance companies to sell watered-down plans for higher out-of-pocket costs. It lets private insurance plans reinstate annual and lifetime caps on benefits for people with serious ills. And it guts Medicaid for people who have nowhere else to turn, the sick, the elderly and people with disabilities. With the passage of this bill, more innocent, hard-working, responsible people will go bankrupt and some will die.

Q - Why? Why is this happening?

A - In order to give billionaires a tax break; in order that the already wealthy and obscenely rich may profit even more.

The person of Jesus as described in New Testament Scripture was not a politician, not a businessman, not a CFO or a CEO. But he was known as a Prophet, and according to St. Mark, he once asked a question that dealt with the issue of profit and loss. It was, of course, more of a moral, ethical statement than a question of economics. “What shall it profit a man if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?”

It’s obviously not the kind of probing question that gets asked much nowadays in corporate board rooms, in Wall Street suites, in pent houses atop gilded towers and most assuredly not in Congressional chambers on Capitol Hill

where budgets are skewed to profit the privileged off the bodies and souls of the sick and dying. But in a supposedly “God-trusting” nation where the honest intent of creating a system of benevolent health care for all is reduced to the sham that is wealth care for the select few, it’s a crying shame that the public trust is sickened time and time again by the moral malaise infecting leaders who choose profit over people’s lives and livelihood.

It’s time to reclaim some moral high ground that’s being constantly eroded away by unjust ideologies and systems that reward those with the most while penalizing “the least of these.” It’s time to make the bottom line not the “Profit motive,” but the “Prophet motive.”

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