

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HEALTH CARE VOTE

Public option, cost, choice, “death panels.” The debate on the particulars of “health care reform” has raged for months. Now we are approaching the precipice as five separate bills emerge from the House and Senate. And I do mean precipice.

There is certainly much to fear from Government run healthcare. Indeed, as with any Government run program there are the “CCCF Problems” which always argue against Government involvement: cost, competence, corruption and fairness. These dangers apply equally in Government run healthcare and they have been dissected and analyzed for months. Yet, there is much more at stake than whether Obamacare or Blue Cross/Blue Shield insures your health; and, this issue, the most fundamental issue, has gotten very little attention: Obamacare, and I mean what the “Progressive” left, lead by Obama, really want - a Government run *universal*¹ healthcare system - will *fundamentally alter American society*.

The American society, and the quintessential nature of the American culture, is based on *individual initiative*; a belief that an individual’s hard work and talents lead not only to success but will overcome virtually any adversity. Our history is a testament to this belief. Yet, Roosevelt and his response to the Great Depression (now believed by more and more to have actually *worsened* the economic troubles) tempted the American culture to look to Government - the National Government - to “take care of people” and fix any problem that they suffer. The Great Society of Johnson was another step in this Progressive view of the world. According to Progressives, a government’s primary function, especially our National Government’s, is to be a paternal provider.

The Progressive programs, although broad in scope, really only touched a fraction of society. Many interest groups (“Factions” in James Madison’s parlance) sought money to cure an ill - real or perceived - but the vast majority of Americans depended on their own hard work and initiative to provide for themselves. The real growth and prosperity experienced over the 1980s and 1990s confirmed the truth of these beliefs. Balanced against this was the failure of the welfare society (and the generations of dependance it created) and the collapse of the Soviet Union and socialist Eastern Europe. These events were proof positive in the 1990s that Government is not the answer. But, in the face of history, Progressive were undaunted; the arrogance of the intellect tells them that *we* can do it better if people would just listen to them.

The Bush presidency (which history will vindicate) and the perfect economic storm of bad regulation (Community Reinvestment Act), Congressional misfeasance (it twice rejected Bush’s efforts to fix Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac) and a private sector which over leveraged sophisticated and relatively misunderstood financial vehicles, dashed the beliefs of many that the

¹ House speaker Pelosi allowed a Freudian slip recently when, as she answered a question about what type of bill she expected would emerge from conference, she describe it as including “universal” care. Spend five minutes listening to “Progressive” talk radio and you learn that this is the goal and that they believe the “public option” is simply a first and non-negotiable first step.

private sector provided the road to prosperity and security.² It was truly a time when people, rightly or wrongly, believed that the Government “had to do something.”

Enter Barack Obama.

Like all candidates from the left, Obama moved to the middle to beat Hillary Clinton and then John McCain. But, the history of what he said, and his extremely liberal philosophy, were still there for all who looked. He gave a glimpse into this true self when he slipped with Joe the Plumber and betrayed his desire for income redistribution. Now, Obama’s massive government spending, his “Pay Czar” and other initiatives like Cap and Trade (*Tax*) reveal for all the Emperor’s true clothes. It is with this perspective that we must now consider how Obama and Pelosi want to change our culture.

Unlike the Great Society programs, health care touches *everyone* at the most personal level. And, because it affects of all, with the effects starting at birth, the consequences of a Government run program are magnified like nothing before in our Nation’s history.³ For the most intimate of needs, we will no longer look to ourselves or our families but to the National Government.

How, then, will we, especially our children, look at Government. The answer is, just like Europeans. Having lived and worked in Europe I came to appreciate that it is the Government that provides; it provides health care⁴, it provides social service care and it provides retirement care.⁵ When the economy turns down, it is the Government that must fix it. The Government becomes the provider in these paternalistic cultures.

This is the fundamental change. When our children grow up knowing it is the Government that cares for them, a not-so-insignificant part of our self-reliance and individual initiative will be forever lost. No longer will we see Government as it was seen by those that created this Nation and made it great, something necessary but which should be limited in its

² The market collapse had profound and far reaching consequences. A colleague who has been a successful attorney for many many years brought home the reality to me when she observed that for every 500 point drop in the Dow, she had to work another *year* before she could retire. She was one of the lucky ones who was not complete wiped out.

³ I assume as an economic given that if there is a public option, private health insurance will eventually disappear (if it is not legislated out of existence before hand). Progressives expect as much and their argument in favor of the program, that there must be an “affordable” - read subsidized - alternative, can only lead to the Government driving private companies out of the market.

⁴ From my first hand experience, health care in France is not completely free, you do not have true free choice and there is most certainly a wait for certain care. I have heard “let’s see if we can find a bed.”

⁵ It is a bit ironic to note that just as the United States rushes headlong into a European system, countries, like France are changing theirs to deal with financial issues. Most recently, the Sarkozy government has proposed moving back the date on which a person can take full retirement and obtain government benefits.

reach and power. As some wish for today, Government will be the first and only choice for any adversity we face, rather than the last resort.

At what cost? Although intangible, individual initiative and self-reliance will inevitably be reduced; this is simply human nature, an aspect of the human condition for which Progressives have little but disdain. Yet, the history of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe proves the point. Their economies were failing and it was not until the omnipotent and omnipresent government was removed that individuals began to reclaim their initiative and self-reliance. The economic drain from which the Federal Republic of Germany continues to suffer from its integration of the former German Democratic Republic can be attributed in no small part to the loss of initiative in the East German society after 40 years of socialist rule; “West Germany” has had to develop “East Germany,” having to recreate a spirit of initiative and remove the spirit of dependence.

Even within the current health care debate, the Congressional Budget Office noted in a July health brief the adverse effects on individual incentive caused by the regressive “subsidy” to pay for health insurance: “Higher [marginal] tax rates also reduce people's incentive to raise their income in other ways, such as working harder in the hope of winning raises; accepting new positions or responsibilities with higher compensation; or investing in their future earning capacity through education, training or other means.” The point here is that the value, and fragility, of individual initiative is *real* and it is being put at risk when Government reduces personal responsibility.

Equally harmful is the transfer of power over our daily lives from the individual to the Government. When the Government “pays” for something it gets to set the rules. Listening to Progressive commentary I have more than once heard a comment to the effect that “of course Government can control your right to (*insert individual right here*) because the Government pays for the consequences through (*insert government program here*).

If there was ever any doubt about the effect of power transfer when the Government assumes responsibility, an examination of the financial bailout and the bailout of GM and Chrysler close the book on the issue. A Government “pay czar” has forced a man, Bank of America president Kenneth Lewis, doing a lawful job under a lawful contract to relinquish his pay. Regardless of what you think about the amount he makes, it is the *GOVERNMENT* which has pressured him into giving up his salary. The same is being contemplated for others in the financial industry and Detroit. Simply because the Government pays, it gets the power to control.

How could that affect the average American? One small, and some might say trivial, example is the tax on “sugary drinks” which some are tossing around. Because they can contribute to obesity and diabetes, diseases which have serious - and costly - health care effects, the *GOVERNMENT* will penalize *all* with a tax on our lawful purchase of this type of product.

Under the guise of “reducing risks” or “lowering health care costs” almost any activity deemed “unhealthy” *BY THE GOVERNMENT* is subject to regulation.

The greatest danger arises from our acquiescence. The Government regulates now but there is still suspicion and debate over the its propriety and scope. If our view toward government changes, will we accept National regulation on what type of literature a bookstore *must* carry; or regulation on when *all* merchants may hold “sales;” or preemptive regulation on commercial speech because it is the responsibility of the Government, and not the individual, to discern even the most obvious artistic license. These are not wild musings but actual examples of government regulation in European countries.

The creeping nature of governmental power and the corruption it works was at the heart of that against which our Founding Fathers rebelled. King George created offices into which he appointed friends, paid them well, taxes the citizenry to support them and gave them power over the people’s lives. The Founding Father’s, and many in England, saw this as a usurpation of the legislative function of Parliament. To the Founders, it was the People who ruled through their legislative representatives; any encroachment into this power was unacceptable. Today we have “czars” and their encroachment is just as real and just as threatening.⁶

In addition to the “Pay Czar;” there is a “Health Czar” (and a few *dozen* other Czars) who is not consented to by the Senate and is not accountable to anyone but President Obama. The President and his Czar (the brother of Chief of Staff Rahm Emmanuel) are establishing *Government defined* “best practices” in health care, considering penalizing doctors who use “too many resources” and talking about “taking the pill” instead of providing full access health care to the elderly. And, these are just a few of the ideas discussed in public. Yet, all this could be possible because of the power transfer to the Government.

Senator Jim DeMint called health care President Obama’s “Waterloo.” It could, in fact, be this Nation’s next Lexington and Concorde. Indeed, who were are as a People and a Nation could be fundamentally changed. We must appreciate this fight for all its consequences: an entitlement which we neither need nor can afford; a debt which will cripple our economic well-being for generations; and, a transfer of spirit and power from its rightful place in the hands of the People, to a Government over which the People are rapidly losing control.

WE THE PEOPLE must accept this call to action and once again defend our rights and liberties.

⁶ Senators Feinstein and Feingold have criticized President Obama for his expansive use of Czars. Senator Feingold even held hearings on the issue, hearings to which President Obama chose *not* to send a White House representative.