

The Failure of Socialized Medicine

This week, 88 stooges of the Canadian Medical Association stood up to sing the praises of state-controlled "health care" and outvoted 68 of their members who boldly suggested we "should be allowed" to spend our own money on our own health, and have that right. Boy. Talk about the dark ages. Canada is still the only country in the history of the Western world to outlaw -OUTLAW! - the provision of basic private medical services.

The politicians responsible for this boondoggle saw a huge political pay-off in the imposition of universal "health" care on an unwitting and gullible population of future sickies and formerly free professionals hungry for income security.

The ostensible motive was egalitarian fairness. Tom Kent, Prime Minister Lester Pearson's (unelected) adviser wrote that he was "a fervent believer in medicare. I regarded it as morally wrong that money in the bank, rather than severity of need, should determine who got what health care services." Morally wrong? O.K. But because it is easy for the state to solve the money needs of the few who may lack funds, or are just too stupid or careless to buy medical insurance, only a fool or a commisar would agree with his solution. Today, it's not private money in the bank that determines who gets what, but public debt and the falling budgets of profligate governments.

So why have ordinary citizens never stood up and said: we are not forced to insure our neighbour's home, and we should not be forced to insure his body. It is wrong to ban the voluntary buying and selling of private professional services in a free society. And it's wrong to offend the Hippocratic Oath (requiring absolute confidentiality between Doctor and patient) by converting by fiat the intimately private medical records of millions of citizens into potential public documents.

We have replaced rationing by price with rationing by the queue. Making you wait will either cure you or kill you. A close friend's mother died waiting for heart surgery (waiting lists are a function of budgets). Desperate, my friend had offered to pay the cost. He would borrow the money, if necessary. Operate today. "Sorry. We have an available operating room, and work-hungry nurses and doctors. But we're not allowed to accept private money from Canadians." Socialized medicine killed a Canadian mother.

An American tourist with the same sick mother? "Step right up, sir! Pleased to take your money." In fact, many Americans come here for our cheaper (because subsidized) medical care. And no waiting. Last year, another friend took his closest buddy, frothing with a heart attack, to four Toronto hospitals. Turned away at each (there were available operating rooms, etc., but no staff, because no budgets), the buddy died at the fifth.

Neither have the people yet said: it is profoundly immoral to finance our "health" care (about 1/3 of most provincial budgets) by massive borrowing from future generations not here to defend themselves. So by now you've noticed the quotation marks around the word "health." That's because many nations - such as Italy and Japan - spend half or less per-capita on what we call health care, yet are just as healthy by all standard measures. Well-regarded U.S. health economist Cotton Lindsay states that by every standard international health measure, "no

[national] health plan has even a ripple of an effect on either male or female life expectancy." So the people have not yet said: socialized medicine is obviously a political program, not a health program, that was imposed on Canadians by fiscal bribery of the provinces and legal trickery (health care is constitutionally off-limits to the feds).

Nor have they said: the consequent waiting lists for services, the many thousands tripping to the U.S. for care that isn't available here, the closing of whole hospital wings despite high demand, the selective care now in place (we'll treat young, not old, this illness, but not that), the "delisting" of formerly covered services - all this results in a system which is profoundly immoral because it converts the ethic of direct Hippocratic medicine (by which formerly free physicians would do their utmost to heal all patients) into a veterinary ethic by which the quality and amount of care and resources available is now controlled by a master. A political master. In a crunch, we end up with the medical freedom of animals.

Neither have they said: that Canada's health care system (in which the trivially ill increasingly compete by right with the truly ill) is swarming with so-called health consultants desperately trying to "rationalize" the system, who necessarily see professionals as the enemy and patients as the meat; that highly-talented specialists have fled our socialized system in droves since the 1960s; that socialized medicine exerts a depressing effect on scientific research and technology; that currently the U.S., which has too many specialists, is successfully luring away legions of good G.P.s; that because Canadian political (and medical) elites are too implicated to admit the gross failure of socialized medicine, we are going to be treated to another 30 years of compensatory policy adjustments and administrative band-aids designed not to make us healthier, but to keep us dumb, thankful, and most importantly - paying.