

Thirty-One Million Smiles

The long trek to an equitable, single-payer health care in U.S.A. now begins. It's been a long time starting. But the effort by President Obama and the Democrats has paid off: just take a look around at all the new smiles on people's faces.

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“There are millions of Americans who are scared to death!”
(John Boehner, House Minority Leader, March 21st, 2010)

It might be thirty, or as high as thirty-two, depending on whom you read. With the health insurance reforms now through and signed by President Obama, I reckon there must be at least thirty-one million additional smiles on faces today and, from now on, every day.

No doubt, the arguments against The Affordable Care Act are set to continue, right through to the November elections and beyond. For now, it's a done deal, as the saying goes.

So, now that the U.S.A. has joined the world of healthier health systems, it's worthwhile to consider two significant aspects: first, all *white* presidents failed to bring about comprehensive health insurance reform. Such is the irony of some great moments in history.

Additionally, at a deep level within the psyche of most Americans, there must be a glimmer of recognition that a societal turning point in American history has finally been reached: gone are the days when a skewed health insurance system is able to easily mask racist attitudes.

There's a second aspect, however, which is equally important about this momentous change: no longer will any administration be able to take your tax money and fail to provide you with the conditions to help – not hinder – your medical problems.

Consider what's been the case for nigh on a century. While successive governments have taxed the citizenry and use the money for a partially effective social contract in U.S.A., countless millions of citizens over that time have been denied a fundamental requirement: a system that helps to keep bodies going and thus continue to pay taxes. Too many people, for too long, were denied adequate health care, yet still paid taxes. Keep doing that, and eventually, too many citizens' health declines.

How dumb was that? Keep allowing things to get worse, so that health care systems became overburdened and too costly....

Isn't prevention better than cure? It's just plain horse sense – despite the continuance of social abnormalities like smoking – to keep citizens healthy, able and willing to work and thereby always swelling the tax base and tax revenues.

Unless ... the government hands over responsibility for the health of all citizens to private enterprise which, as we all know, places more emphasis upon making big profits than in resolving big health problems. How irrational is that, from the perspective of governments wanting to continue to tax its citizenry? Yes, I know other factors come into play, but it should be patently obvious that healthy people help to keep the nation healthy.

So: obviously, over time, the collective health of the nation tends to decline even faster when the citizens cannot obtain good health care. The chronic alcoholism in the old Soviet Union is an obvious example. Hence, more and more good workers descend into long-term medical problems; yet those chronically sick workers continue to be taxed, on and on and on and....

Until most citizens finally woke up to the fact that they've been robbed: first by prior governments that didn't provide a service (i.e. a good health care system) for money rendered (i.e. taxes), and second by a rapacious bunch of capitalists who just want to make a buck – at your expense, and twice over. Isn't that rich? So, is it any wonder that things have been going downhill while costs have been going up?

And so: there's John Boehner, a few days ago on the PBS News Hour and later on News Radio here in Australia, pontificating in his oh-so-avuncular fashion that "...millions of Americans are scared to death." Of what, Mr Boehner? Of what? Have to hand it to Boehner, though: he really does have a great voice for delivering a lousy message. Maybe he should be on late night TV? Now, if he'd said: "There are millions of Americans who are dunned to death!" – well, I'd be more inclined to believe him. Wouldn't you?

It's not often that people get to see a fundamental change in the way their nation works – and from now on, provided the GOP can drop the façade and get on with the job. For the sake of America's economic future, I sure hope so. Moreover, in a multi-connected world, chronic sickness of the biggest, global player doesn't help anybody.

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