

Obama's Health Care Reform: Socialism? by J. Conrad Guest

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AFTER WATCHING President Obama speak earlier this month on the progress of his health care reform bill, I'm resting a little easier, even if I'm a little uneasy with some of his claims, namely that this reform will pay for itself.

No one can argue that the health care industry in this country isn't broken. It has been for decades. That something hasn't been done before now proves the power of special interest groups in Washington who would rather stay the present course, as well as the inability, or unwillingness, of our elected officials to accomplish much to benefit We, the People, who elect them to office.

Opposing pundits argue that Obama's plan is socialism. In 1961, before he ever ran for public office, Ronald Reagan said, "One of the traditional methods of imposing statism or socialism on a people has been by way of medicine. It's very easy to disguise a medical program as a humanitarian project. Most people are a little reluctant to oppose anything that suggests medical care for people who possibly can't afford it."

I don't deny Obama's bill more than hints at socialism, and I'm nothing if not a proponent of smaller government. Lately my inbox has been filling with email slamming the plan and telling me that it won't work, and, worst, questioning Obama's honesty. Sadly, none of them offers an alternative. I can't speak for Obama's integrity any more than I can for the next man. Who can know what is in a man's heart? He's eloquent, that much is certain, perhaps the best orator we've had in office since Reagan, but until he is caught in a lie I'm prone to give him the benefit of the doubt, as I would any man. Frankly, I'm more leery of those who are making this a partisan issue. For too long government has been party pitted against party, at the expense of the nation.

Many say Obama is forcing, rushing, this bill through Congress. No, he has an agenda, and he affixed a timeline to get this task done. For too long Congress has discussed and debated this issue, then tabled it for further discussion later, and another year passes, another term expires, and the decades elapse while the status quo is maintained. Kudos must go to Obama for making something happen. If nothing else positive can be said of Obama during the first nine months of his presidency, it's that he's a doer.

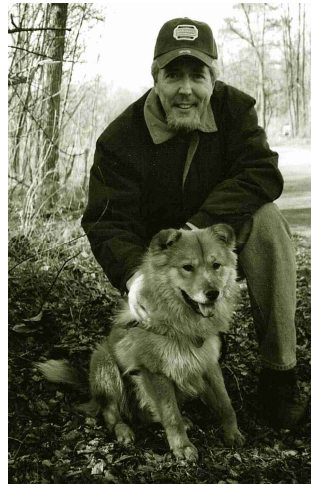
I turn fifty-three in October. I've been concerned for many years over the future of my own health care, that it won't be there for me when I may need it most. I've gone so far as to voice a conspiracy theory that health care for the rich may go a long way toward solving the Social Security and Medicare problems.

That something needs to be done is obvious. Some minor tweaks along the way during the last forty years may have prevented the monstrous and potentially painful overhaul that now stands before us.

Change to some, including me, comes hard, but a change to the health care industry is necessary if the Baby Boomer generation, and those that follow, are to have any hope for the health care that most of us will, at some point, need.

Unless someone comes forth with a better alternative, one that doesn't involve changing nothing, I back Obama's plan and

hope that, when the time comes, I'll have access to the best care available to me — the same quality of care accessible to the very rich. Isn't that part of what equality means?



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