



# Justice Rising

## Grassroots Solutions to Corporate Domination

### Health for Humans—Not Corporate Profits

by Jim Tarbell & Dr. Peter Mott

Human health or corporate “sickness care,” which will it be? Can we fund a system that promotes healthy people, healthy products and a healthy planet? Or are we doomed to a market-driven system that medicalizes every natural aspect of our lives from sadness to ageing, drives up medical costs with unnecessary procedures, mandates corporate health insurance, poisons us and, then, makes money on the cure.

The market has no place in health care. As Harvard researchers Himmelstein and Woolhandler note, “health care is too precious, intimate and corruptible to entrust to the market.” Corporate medical facilities have a higher mortality rate, cost more money, and provide less care than non-profit and public facilities. Avoiding the strictures of the Hippocratic Oath, they skim off the wealthiest clients and most profitable procedures.

Left with the ethical burden of caring for the poor and uninsured, publicly-owned hospitals are threatened with extinction across the country. Access to quality medical care is becoming jeopardized in both rural America and impoverished urban neighborhoods.

Sixty years ago, the Supreme Court unleashed the market-driven medical/industrial complex when it ruled that medicine was a business. This decision discouraged the American Medical Association from promoting medical ethics. In the 1960s, compromises over the Medicare Bill, which were fueled by our money-powered political system, opened up the US Treasury to a secure source of profits that Wall Street could not pass up. Since that time, health expenses have tripled as a percentage of the national economy and health-care corporations are some of the biggest in the world. They have become the biggest players on K Street where lobbyists manipulate political decisions and the revolving door between the industry and regulatory agencies guarantees that the “FDA is a captive of the drug industry.”

As the 2008 elections approach, we are caught between money and medical justice. Will we elect politicians who create a private-insurance-funded health system that exacerbates the problems of corporate “sickness care”? Or can we establish a single, non-

politicized funding source that will give rise to a new system to promote human health? By establishing this type of single-payer system (see HR 676 pg. 8-9), we could completely end any role for private corporations in the health-care system—as it is in Canada.

The Canadian system includes Regional Health Planning, which leads to proper distribution of hospitals and clinics, and more rational numbers of health personnel, high-tech machines, etc. Also, medications are usually approved only if they fit with publicly approved formularies, always favoring generic drugs. All our worries would be easier to handle with a single-payer system including preventive care, a system of long-term care, hospice care, and respite care for overburdened, home-bound caregivers. If all these essential services are planned into the single-payer system, we get savings that cut the total cost per person/year from \$7000 to about \$3000. But the deal will be off if the mega-corporations win the big fight, which is coming, over health care funding.

*Who will decide our course, the people or corporate management? What kind of democracy do we have here?*

This issue of *Justice Rising* lays out what is at stake in this showdown. It is not just a question of the US health care system, because through trade agreements, our corporate-driven system can infect the whole planet. We must stop the disease now!



graphic: ethicscenter.nd.edu

**Per capita health care expenditures in the United States are twice the median level for industrial nations**

Dr. Oscar Gandy, page 3

**Industry's successful efforts to release harmful chemicals can be attributed to corporate involvement in writing legislation and setting regulations**

Alis Valencia, page 4

**Corporations are the main force denying the rights of humans to medical care.**

Dr. Peter Mott, page 8

**We all need to play the "Save the World Symphony," none of us has to play solo.**

Sandra Steingraber, page 13

**A Publication of The Alliance for Democracy**