

Health Care in the US

Human Rights vs Corporate Rights

By Dr. Peter Mott

The time has come to see the issues around health care as the rights of people versus the rights of corporations. From the United Nations' Declaration of Human Rights to the 1971 proclamation of President Richard Nixon, it has long been agreed that all humans have a right to adequate health care.

In the past six decades, all the world's industrialized nations have developed national health programs—except the US. In the 1940s and '50s, the American Medical Association (AMA) spent large sums on propaganda and lobbying to stop progress towards a national health care system.

By the 1960s, however, the wealthier, self-interested corporations involved in health provision, led by the insurance and pharmaceutical industries, formed the main forces denying the rights of people to adequate medical care. They have blocked all progress toward fulfillment of our right to health care by spending billions on propaganda and “buying” state and federal politicians. Many of the involved corporations are for-profit (eg, Aetna, Cigna, Hospital Corporation of America, Humana, etc.). Many others are so-called non-profit (eg, Blue Cross, Kaiser-Permanente, etc.). But both are part of the confusing and excessively expensive non-system of health care we have today.

Failure of the non-system: Dependence on Insurance Corporations

A confusing multiplicity of insurers in the US has resulted in fast-rising costs and fast-falling numbers of people who are insured. As a result we have:

- Forty seven million Americans (16%) with no health insurance.
- Approximately 50 million people (17%) with inadequate insurance.
- 22,000 deaths per year in the US caused by the lack of access to proper medical care.
- The average cost of insurance premiums in our country increasing 78% in the past six years. It is now \$11,600 per year for a family of four. In 2006 this averaged \$7129 per person per year in the US compared to \$2956 in Canada.
- Falling levels of healthiness of Americans. In 2000 the World Health Organization ranked US health levels thirty-seventh of 190 countries studied.

Almost one-third of the US population is unable to secure proper medical care including:

- Those over age 65 with only Medicare and therefore not covered for long-term care in nursing homes or home care, and often without outpatient prescription insurance.



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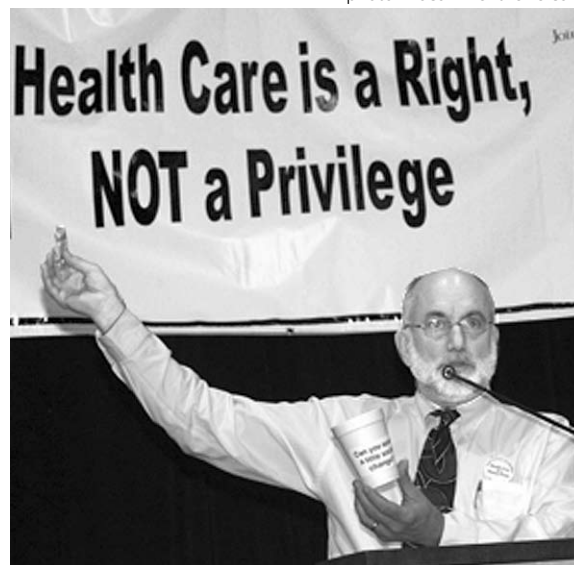


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