

Defeat in Victory: the Democrats' Health Care Bill

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Global Research, March 22, 2010

22 March 2010

Region: [USA](#)

Theme: [History](#)

What looks like a big victory for Obama and the Democrats may be their greatest undoing. It's true that the passage of Obama's health care bill represents a significant political victory for the Democrats. But sometimes a battle won could equal a lost war.

It's telling that Obama had so much trouble in getting his own party to pass the bill on a simple majority basis: the bill was so blatantly watered down with the corporate hose that anyone with their name attached to it feared future electoral doom.

This kept the Democrat's left wing — the so-called progressive wing — from initially giving their seal of approval. It must be remembered that some of the left Democrats initially claimed support for single payer health care. After being scolded by the Party leadership that this demand was "off the table," the lefts moved to the right and demanded a "strong public option."

The public option grew weaker and weaker as the health care bill evolved. The left Democrats pinned all their hopes on it; they ignored the rest of the health care bill, which slashed Medicare and taxed the "Cadillac" health care plans of union workers, all in the hopes that a miniscule public option would give the lefts some political cover.

It wasn't meant to be. The final health care vision is the brainchild of the monopoly corporations who dominate health care in America. Their power will remain untouched. Indeed, it will only grow.

Dennis Kucinich, the most "radical" of the progressive Democrats, waited until the last round before he threw in the towel to the health care industry. His capitulation is especially symbolic, as many progressive activists around the country remained in the Democratic Party solely because he was there. His inglorious surrender signals what many progressives already knew: the Democrats are a corporate dominated party, where liberal ideas are tolerated so long as they have no actual effect on policy.

With Kucinich and the other left Democrats now fully discredited, the Democratic Party has further undermined its credibility — what little remained. Those who hoped that the party could be reformed— that the corporate wing could somehow be out-muscled— will be duped no longer.

Also, the bill's taxing of "Cadillac" health care plans will further alienate organized labor from the Democrats. What little faith the unions had in the Democrats will be badly shaken.

More significantly, those millions of people who are soon to be mandated to buy shoddy, corporate insurance will vent their rage solely at the Democrats. A significant portion of the currently uninsured will remain without insurance, and be penalized at tax time for not buying into the corporate healthcare scam. These millions will be never vote Democrat again.

The Democrats have won a congressional battle against the Republicans, while sawing off the branches of support on which they are perched. The party that was once "the lesser of two evils" is now competing on equal footing with the Republicans.

With both political parties dominated by the big banks and corporations, there is ever growing political vacuum to the left (the vacuum to the right is being filled by the tea partiers).

There have been countless attempts to organize a mass third party. The numerous progressive political parties that currently exist do so on an insignificant scale.

What remains missing is the support of labor unions, which represent millions of working members. Labor is the only social force that currently exists on the left capable of creating a mass-based party with the resources capable of competing with the two parties of big business.

What the unions lack in funds they make up for with potentially millions of volunteers — door-knockers, phone bankers, fund raisers, community organizers, etc.

If labor were to finally declare its independence from the Democrats, and announce the

drive to create an independent labor led party representing the majority of working people in this country, the “fractured left” would find instant cohesion.

If this labor based party were based on a progressive platform—including Jobs, Peace and Medicare for All — not only would the country’s millions of union members join and vote for it, but the tens of millions of working people disenfranchised by the Democrats would instantly jump on board.

The political void to the left needs to be filled quickly. Tea Partiers and Ron Paul Republicans are benefiting from this political black hole: many people who are progressive at heart are being tricked by these right-wing populists. A bold showing from America’s Labor Movement would stop this trend dead in its tracks and open the way for true majority rule.

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