

Jan. 31, 2008
Progressive Ponderings
“Entitlements” – Part 3

Just as “carbon credits,” allowing corporations to delay removing their carbon output, add nothing to the well-being of nation or people, we have another “entitlement” problem that needs to be addressed. A blood sucker has attached its tentacles to our health care system causing extraordinarily high prices (compared with other industrial nations), and frustration for patients and health care providers. It also eliminates part of our population from receiving basic health care protection, the poor in our midst. We have allowed this predator to step between provider and patient. This predator adds fifteen to thirty percent to the cost of health care while adding nothing to its quality or its universality.

HMOs and the Health Insurance industry, in order to sell policies, portray themselves as beneficent depositories of health care assurance. But when care is needed, their goal is to deny payment whenever possible. These “entitlement” corporate leeches are probably the single most frustrating obstacle in improving our health care system. Yet, nearly all politicians and providers include these corporate “entitlements” in proposed reforms. All have vested interests and are placing these interests above citizen needs and desires.

Knowing all the “entitlements” that flow to business and wealth is beyond what most of us can ascertain. We’ve probably just touched the surface of the schemes invented by the powerful in these three “Entitlements” Ponderings. A case could be made that a good portion of the Washington lobbying industry is seeking “entitlements” for their various plutocrats.

A November, 2007 Harris poll found big business is in extremely low regard as Americans begin to sense this governmental bias of business and wealth over citizen needs. This has resulted in some campaigning politicians advancing “populist” positions. This word “populist,” referring to the “rights and wisdom of the common people” has also been given a negative connotation. Populism should be the basis of democratic decision-making but elitist propaganda and media ownership makes it sound like a revolutionary take-over.

Tom Donohue, president of the U.S. Chamber of Commerce sees this “populist rhetoric” as a threat to the “entitlement” of the wealthy to rule: “We plan to build a grass-roots business organization so strong that when it bites you in the butt, it bleeds.” He then threatens to punish candidates who oppose business interests.

Donohue’s outburst is unique. Usually money likes to manipulate in secret. Few media outlets published Donohue’s remarks but will slyly promote his agenda.

This perceived “entitlement” of wealth to govern and thus promote extreme differences in economic inequality is the story of history. Today, also, wealth is seeking more entitlements. Historically, wealth, never satisfied, sought more wealth and drove us into wars, colonialism, enslavement, and extreme divisions among peoples and cultures. We’re there again!

We have to listen to the words and recognize the doublespeak behind them – spreading democracy, advancing freedom, free markets, globalization, free trade, tax cuts, security, axis of evil, reform. As currently used by this imperial/ industrial/ wealth complex they hide the goals of power and wealth for the privileged. Add to this the “rugged individualism” as a virtue they have used to achieve this rarified stratosphere of superior living. It, individualism, masks the human need for social connections. It denies that some benefit because of their birth, race, gender and built-in prejudices. It thrives on hate and fear and lies. It is America today!

We face a long struggle but it is winnable. The current radical behavior of the United States on the international scene has awakened the world to America’s imperial ambitions. We, subjected to the lies and manipulations of wealth and power, are slowly realizing what the remainder of the world has already concluded. Maybe things had to get this bad in order to wake us up. Justice, not “entitlements” for the wealthy, is the way to peace, to security, to love.
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