

## Obama Bound for Mount Rushmore?

President Obama, as his aides will tell anyone within hearing distance, wants to go down in history as one of the "greats." Most African Americans, purely for reasons of group affirmation, would also love to see the First Black President beaming from Mount Rushmore (in the Black Hills of South Dakota, no less!), alongside George and Thomas the Slave Masters, Teddy the Arch Imperialist, and Lincoln the Emancipator.

Most of the U.S. corporate media – those who make the first drafts of history acceptable to the ruling class – also want Obama to have a shot at a place in the pantheon, since he has done some service to the rulers.

The U.S. Supreme Court's vetting of Obama's healthcare legislation, according to the New York Times, is a "personal reprieve...leaving intact his hopes of joining the ranks of Franklin D. Roosevelt, Lyndon B. Johnson and Ronald Reagan as presidents who fundamentally altered the course of the country." Obama has often compared himself to all three, agreeing with Reagan that the Sixties was a decade plagued by "excesses" – which, to Reagan's mind, included Lyndon Johnson's expansive social legislation.

As the Times tells it, Obama has nearly completed the work of his predecessors. "Not just Roosevelt and Johnson, but Harry S. Truman, Nixon and Mr. Clinton all tried and failed to move the country toward universal health coverage." Obama's bill is historic because it "seeks to end the status of the United States as the world's only rich country with millions of involuntarily uninsured citizens." The Times resorts to crazily contorted wording to convince us the Affordable Care Act is the next logical step in the civilizing of the United States; that it bears some resemblance to universal health care as practiced in the rest of the developed world – an outrageous distortion of fact and history.

Obamacare, like previous Republican healthcare schemes, is based on the principle that people should pay for their own bodily maintenance, and that "free riders" must be forced into the private pool. It expands the healthcare compact only for those who are destitute, while turning everyone else into profit-centers for corporations.

That's not the direction universal healthcare advocates have been trying to go, all these years. It is, at best, a detour, and more likely an historic setback to the movement for a truly national health care policy. The first U.S. entitlement programs evolved from pension plans for Civil War veterans and their families. "By 1910," according to the Social Welfare History Project, "Civil War veterans and their survivors enjoyed a program of disability, survivors and old-age benefits similar in some ways to the later Social Security programs." In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed into law the Social Security Act, which also included provisions for unemployment insurance.

Harry Truman unsuccessfully proposed National Health Insurance, starting in 1945. Lyndon Johnson introduced Medicare and Medicaid with his Social Security Act of 1965. Ever since, the struggle has been to expand these programs to the entire population, as a matter of right – as was occurring globally even in formerly "Third World" places like Taiwan. "Entitlements" have been the bugaboo of the Right since the New Deal. But even in the last days of President Reagan's reactionary rule, the trajectory of American healthcare sentiment was arching towards universal single-payer – the world-class solution. The Heritage Foundation, founded in the early Seventies by arch-reactionaries, saw the handwriting on the wall – and took preemptive action in 1989.

As Chris Weigant wrote in the Huffington Post, Heritage commissioned its Director of Domestic Policy Strategies, Stuart Butler, to produce the Right's own "Framework for Reform" of healthcare – one that kept the profits locked in and diverted the public from single-payer healthcare as a universal entitlement. Everyone would be pushed into the "market-based" – for-profit – pool. Stuart wrote: "This means that, while government would take on the obligation to find ways of guaranteeing care for those Americans unable to obtain protection in the market, perhaps because of chronic health problems or lack of income, Americans with sufficient means would no longer be able to be 'free riders' on society by avoiding sensible health insurance expenditures and relying on others to pay for care in an emergency or in retirement." Republican Bob Dole ran for president on an "individual mandate" health plan, the same concept Romney implemented in Massachusetts.

It's also the Obama scheme, as Chris Weigant concluded in the Huffington Post: "The individual mandate which was included in Obamacare is so close to what Stuart Butler of the Heritage Foundation initially suggested that we can honestly say there is no appreciable difference between the two."

If Obama belongs in a pantheon, it's a Republican one. He is not completing the healthcare project begun by FDR in 1935. Obama has, instead, succeeded in passing the Right's program, created to stop what looked like the inevitable triumph of a single-payer system under which most insurance companies would go extinct.

Just three years ago, it seemed that the day had finally come for some form of Medicare-for-all, which has long enjoyed the support of roughly two-thirds of the public. Obama pulled a switch. Supreme Court Justice John Roberts, a stalwart of the Right who is young enough to keep his eye on the future, knew a good deal for his side when he saw one, and signed off on it. He's a lot smarter than those deluded Lefties who want to send Obama to Mount Rushmore.

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