

**The
BLACK
C o m m e n t a t o r**
Commentary, analysis and investigations
on issues affecting African Americans
www.blackcommentator.com

July 30, 2009 - Issue 335

[Contents of Issue](#)

[Click here](#)

[Home](#)

**Canadian Union Leader Describes U.S. Attacks Against
Single-Payer Health Care as "Scurrilous"**

Solidarity America

By John Funicello

BlackCommentator.com Columnist

Click on the back button of your browser to return to non printer friendly page of this article

[Click here](#) to get helpful hints for viewing and printing this printer friendly plain text page

Many Americans were beginning to wonder how long it would take for Canadians to reply to the smears and misinformation - and outright lies - about their single-payer health care system in what has passed for debate among politicians and the people about changing America's health insurance industry to one that serves all of the people.

The Canadian reply has come, not from the prime minister or top politicians in government, but it has come from a top trade union leader in the form of a letter to members of Congress and President Barack Obama.

James Clancy, president of the 340,000-member National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE), urged those involved in the U.S. health care debate to look past the scare tactics and "scurrilous misrepresentations."

Considering that the Canadians have about 30 million population, compared with the U.S.'s 300,000,000, Clancy's union is equivalent to the combined memberships of the National Education Association and the American Federation of Teachers, so it is a significant national force.

One of the major differences between the two countries is that, in Canada, not only are the rank-and-file unionists educated, but they are active and they are usually encouraged by the leadership to become involved politically. So, it's not surprising for Clancy to be speaking out, even though neither Prime Minister Stephen Harper, nor any other official, have said anything of any consequence to defend Canada's universal health care system.

In his July 24 "dear friends" letter to President Obama, Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius, and all members of both houses of Congress, Clancy declared, "Unfortunately, rather than a true debate about its merits, Canada's single-payer system, and by extension Canada's reputation, has been the victim of a multi-million dollar tidal wave of special-interest propaganda and scare tactics. You need to know that an objective examination of the evidence reveals that Canada's single-payer health system is the triumph of values and economics."

Judged by any standard, the Canadian system is far and away the better of the two systems. Canadians could not imagine their equivalent of America's 47 million without access to health care and perhaps an equal number with inadequate coverage. In the U.S., medical-emergency-induced bankruptcies are a national disgrace.

Canadians believe that health care is a human right and it shows in the public health statistics. When it comes to health outcomes, on almost every critical measure, Clancy noted, "whether it is life expectancy rates, infant mortality rates, or potential years of lost life, Canada rates much better than the U.S. and we're among the best in the world."

Commercials against any reform that threatens insurance industry profits are beginning to flood America's television screens. Notable are those paid for by Patients United Now, a fake grass roots group launched by the fake grass roots group, Americans for Prosperity, which was responsible for such things as the "drill, baby, drill" rallies (for offshore oil drilling) and the "Joe the plumber" tour against the Employees Free Choice Act.

The same attitude prevails now as in the relentless campaign against any involvement by government in health care 16 years ago. The "Harry and Louise" ads from that time, against any real health care reform, have been hauled out, once again. The actors who perform in the ad should be ashamed, especially if they are union members.

Clancy shows the claims that single-payer universal health care in the U.S. is "socialism" to be a lie, just as it is a lie that America's Medicare system is "socialized medicine." What *could* be considered to be socialized is the care received by millions of veterans within the Veterans Administration, in which doctors, nurses, and other staff are actually employed by the government. Would the Right Wing in America do away with that system and push veterans out the door to face what other Americans face every day? It's doubtful.

The president and congress are not responsible for protecting the insurance industry, which is what's happening now. They are responsible for providing health care for all and they seem to be criminally shirking that responsibility.

No one in Canada loses health coverage because of loss of a job, unlike in the U.S. and, Clancy points out in the letter, "In addition, our single-payer system provides both small and large businesses in Canada with a clear competitive advantage.

"Employers don't have to provide basic health care for their workers - our single-payer system does that. Our businesses also enjoy the benefits of a healthier and more productive workforce thanks to our universal system. Unlike in the U.S. where basic

health care is a major source of labor relations strife, it's hardly an issue at the bargaining table in Canada. We also enjoy greater labor mobility because workers who don't have to worry about losing health benefits are more willing and able to switch jobs and move to where the work is."

The lies and dissembling that we've been entertained with for the past few years have told us that the waiting periods for certain medical procedures are extreme in Canada, but the experience of Canadians proves the lie. Clancy offers to host a "mission" to Canada for American politicians to see for themselves what conditions are. For their own credibility, they should take him up on that.

Finally, Clancy declared, "An objective review of the evidence shows that Canada's single-payer system has consistently delivered affordable, timely, accessible, comprehensive and high-quality care to the overwhelming majority of Canadians on the basis of need, not wealth. It has also contributed to our international competitiveness and the productivity of our workforce."

What the congress and President Obama are poised to present to the American people - a "public option" to "compete" with the private companies - promises to be more of the same that we've had: an industry-run system in which corporate bureaucrats make their careers on denial of care for very sick patients who cost them money and, therefore, cut into their profits.

Under the current U.S. system, the more sick people who are thrown out of the plans and the more potential enrollees who are denied health insurance because of a "pre-existing condition," the larger the bonuses of those who preside over the system.

Considering that health care is a human right, in Canada and elsewhere in the developed world, the U.S. has to be seen as offering the most inhumane system that a so-called advanced democracy could offer. And, it costs more money per capita and makes the U.S. less competitive in the world's economic system.

Single-payer for America, like Canada's system, is the only way to go, but only the American people can demand it. Their elected officials will do nothing (with a few exceptions) toward that end, unless they're forced because they are beholden to the lobbyists who bear heavy bags laden with campaign money.

Our advice? Make them go to Canada to see for themselves and demand that they represent the people for a change.


[Click here to comment on any article
in this issue or see what others are saying in the](#)
The BlackCommentator Readers' Corner Blog


BlackCommentator.com Columnist, John Funciello, is a labor organizer and former union organizer. His union work started when he became a local president of The Newspaper Guild in the early 1970s. He was a reporter for 14 years for newspapers in New York State. In addition to labor work, he is organizing family farmers as they struggle to stay on the land under enormous pressure from factory food producers and land developers. Click [here](#) to contact Mr. Funciello.

Get Breaking
News Updates From
BC_Nation
on
twitter
Twitter account is not
needed to read or listen
[Click here](#)

[Contents of Issue](#)
[Click here](#)

[Home](#)

Click Here To
CONTRIBUTE TO  NOW

Click Here To
CONTACT 

Your comments are always welcome.

e-Mail re-print notice

If you send us an e-Mail message we may publish all or part of it, unless you tell us it is not for publication. You may also request that we withhold your name.

Thank you very much for your readership.

Website Design and Hosting provided by



Copyright © 2002-2009
www.BlackCommentator.com
All Rights Reserved