

Clinton's health care ambitious gamble

Recognizing both the needs of the nation and the needs of his presidency, President Bill Clinton announced his long-awaited health-care reform package last Wednesday to the people and the Congress ... and waited for the response.

The plan, which has been called the most sweeping social initiative since the Depression era's New Deal, enjoys support from nearly all corners ... at least in the general sense that it pledges to make health care available to all. It is in the details that the cheers and applause give way to questions and anxiety, and even staunch opposition.

Probably the most important detail to work out is the question of how much more the Clinton plan will cost, as compared to the status quo. Although supporters of the plan claim that the majority of the cost will be absorbed by eliminating inefficiencies under the current system, it seems doubtful that such a widespread program as this, which hopes to extend basic medical coverage to 37 million Americans who currently lack such benefits, could do so without requiring a hike in taxes.

The plan will require all employers, regardless of the size of their business, to provide health insurance to all employees and to pay 80 percent of the premiums. Small business owners, understandably, are some of the most vigorously opposed to the plan. In an effort to assuage some of their fears, however, a cap would be placed on how much a given business would have to pay in premiums: a modest 3.5 percent of the total payroll.

Under Clinton's plan, a patient's right to choose his own doctor would be preserved, although choosing a physician "out of network" would result in the patient's having to pay 20 percent of the bill. Admittedly, those people without the means to pay that 20 percent would be unable to choose, but many of them are effectively without a choice under the current system, because they can't afford any doctors at all.

One thing that all sides agree on is the need for reform. Already, several alternative plans have appeared. Hopefully, the competition between these rival plans and Clinton's proposal will result in an improved hybrid that is stronger than each of the individual plans that inspired it. Intelligently, Clinton has welcomed this competition, recognizing that the spirit of compromise will have to play a part if there is to be any significant health-care reform at all.

Clinton, elected as an outsider, unfamiliar with the ways of Washington, has been quick to learn. The Democrats in Congress have been slow to toe the Clinton line, and the Republicans slower. He knows that any degree of partisanship may doom his efforts completely, and many of Clinton's programs, which have already run the congressional gauntlet, bear the scars of partisan politics.

For Clinton to push for health-care reform, in spite of this risk, is an ambitious gamble, but it is one that he promised to take on the campaign trail and one that the country desperately needs him to take.



LETTERS

Prisoner's plea

I am a prisoner on death row at the Arizona State Prison and was wondering if you would do me a favor. I have been here for almost 16 years and have no family or friends outside who I can write to.

I was wondering if you would put a small ad in the campus newspaper for me asking for correspondence. If you are not able to do that, then maybe you have some type of message or bulletin board you could put it on. I realize you are not a pen pal club or anything like that, but I would appreciate it if you would help me.

Death row prisoner, caucasian male, age 46 desires correspondence with either male or female college students. Wants to form a friendly relationship and more or less exchange past and present experiences and ideas. Will answer all letters and exchange photos. Prison rules require a complete name and return address on the outside of the envelope.

Jim Jeffers
Arizona State Prison
Box B-38604
Florence, Ariz. 85232

while we hear the screams of big timber and their brainwashed workers will not have a forest left to cut anyway in a few years.

They saw this crisis coming for years and years, but paid no heed, supported by the U.S. Forest Service, the protectors of our forest. They have been too busy figuring timber sales and putting in thousands of miles of logging roads, while the stupid taxpayers footed the tax bills.

In the end it will be cheaper to subsidize the unemployment of workers than put billions into roads. There is a lot of work that our ravaged forests and streams need, as well as replanting, which has never kept pace with clear-cutting.

Why didn't Don Peters talk to the Native Forest Council or ONRC before giving his opinion and misleading others?

Hilde K. Cherry
Eugene

Catholics forget

William Clinton could not have been elected without the Catholic vote. Clinton's position on abortion was in direct opposition to the teaching of the Catholic faith taught to him at Georgetown University.

The church instructs its faithful that abortion is murder. This precept has been taught for 20 centuries. The American Catholic population knew the church's instructions about abortion as proclaimed by the Pope John Paul II, but chose to papal declarations because of economic considerations, especially employment.

The consciences of most

Catholics were not troubled by casting a vote for pro-abortion politicians such as Clinton and Perot. The consciences of too many Catholics have become corrupt because of the commission of repeated mortal sins never sorrowfully confessed to a priest.

Catholics did not realize, therefore, that they became accomplices to the abortion when they voted for pro-abortion candidates last November. Consequently, millions of Catholics with free will and sufficient knowledge committed mortal sin last Election Day. It is sad to relate that the American Catholic Bishops failed to provide specific moral direction about voting for pro-abortion politicians. Their inaction was truly the "silence of the shepherds." This sin of omission was also morally grievous!

We Catholics have forgotten that God is perfect love and perfect justice. If he did not chastise us for the horrible sin of abortion, God would contradict his nature. He can never do this. We will be punished. Only prayer — especially Rosary — and penance can reduce the tribulations.

Joseph E. Valley, M. Ed.
Washington, Conn.

Daily?

The newspaper's name should be changed by striking the word "daily." It is not and never has been published every day. When that happens, and perhaps it should happen, the word can be restored.

Charles O. Porter
Attorney at Law

Delayed reaction

Don Peters on July 3 gave an "opinion" that I find appalling. Who is he to talk about the forest problem and then compliment the president on his solutions? I admit the problem appears difficult, but not in the eyes of the old-growth forest, which is not protected after all.

Peters talks like we are "starting out" now. Does he not know that more than 90 percent of an ancient forest has already been cut down and that we are fighting over the last precious 5 percent to 10 percent?

Our mountains are like a rat-eaten blanket full of holes and no continuum where endangered species as well as the old trees are exposed and doomed. Who cares? A whole ecosystem is being sacrificed to greed

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The Oregon Daily Emerald will attempt to print all letters containing comments on topics of interest to the University community.

Letters to the editor must be limited to no more than 250 words, legible, signed and the identification of the writer must be verified when the letter is submitted.

The Emerald reserves the right to edit any letter for length or style