

EDITORIAL

Striking A Compromise On Health Care

BY SENATOR BOB PACKWOOD

The health care debate has been raging in our nation's capital all year, and last week there were significant developments.

As the ranking minority member of the Senate Finance Committee, I am taking a lead role in shaping the legislation that will attempt to ensure quality health care for all Americans.

On June 14, together with Senator Patrick Moynihan (D-NY), I met with President Clinton and senior White House advisors to discuss health care reform and the prospects for getting a bill through Congress this year.

I told the President that there was broad, bipartisan consensus in both the House and Senate to pass a bill with meaningful insurance reforms so that every American who wants health insurance can get it, afford it, and keep it!

But I also told the President that Congress could not, and would not, pass any bill containing employer mandates, price controls or major new taxes.

Most of my hour-long meeting with the President focused on the issues of universal coverage and mandates. I told the President that, while I have long supported mandates -- I introduced a bill for President Nixon which contained an employer mandate -- the votes were not there to pass a mandate in this Congress. I told the President there was passionate opposition to mandates from small business owners, retailers, restaurateurs and other businesses.

Finally, I discussed with the President a possible compromise position that would break the deadlock without imposing burdensome mandates. We could pass legislation this year that would make insurance coverage portable from job to job, eliminate the practice of excluding those with "pre-existing conditions" from insurance coverage, and make other insurance and market reforms. If these voluntary measures don't bring us to universal coverage within a few years, the President could then submit legislation that he or she believes will bring us to universal coverage.

Just as in some trade agreements, the President's proposal would be considered by Congress on a "fast-track" basis without a filibuster. While the President's proposal would not go into effect without a positive vote of Congress, this proposal would allow the new reforms to take effect, and for their effectiveness to be judged before we undertake other, more controversial proposals.

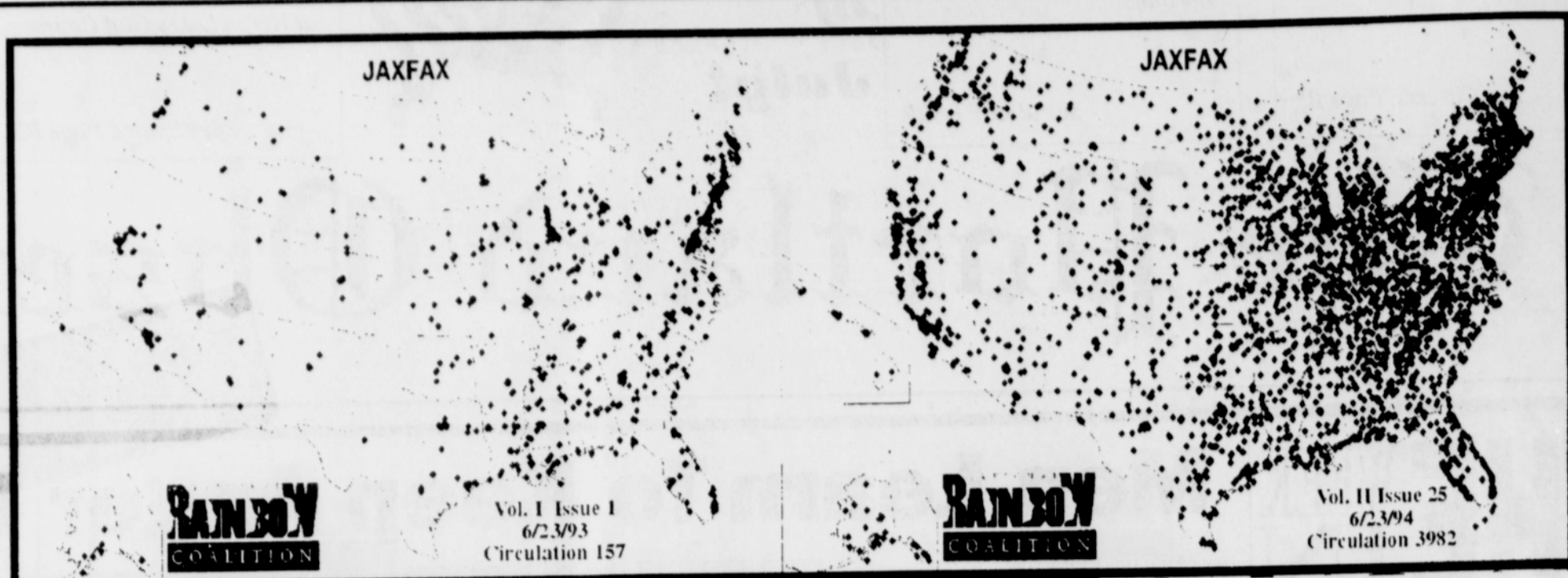
A number of critical events have occurred which are having a major impact on the health care debate, and have led us to this point.

- 1) Proponents of managed competition have backed off all mandates;
- 2) The Congressional Budget Office estimated that the bill sponsored by Senators Breaux (D-LA) and Durenburger (R-MN) would provide coverage for 91 percent of Americans without mandates;
- 3) And, the Lewin/VHI study indicated that covering that 91 percent through strictly voluntary means would account for 97 percent of all this country's health care costs.

On June 15, the Los Angeles Times reported "Tuesday's meeting, in particular an exchange between Packwood and [Treasury Secretary] Bentsen, marked a turning point at which the discussions began to take the form of true negotiations, knowledgeable observers said. 'The choice is now fairly clear,' said one senior Clinton advisor. The options are to either work out a deal with Packwood... or accept defeat..."

It is my sincere desire to arrive at a fair compromise which will give every American access to good health care insurance at an affordable price. With this in mind, be assured that I will continue to work to bring my fellow Senators together on this issue.

As always, please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns you may have.



JAXFAX Is Growing On You: Anniversary Edition

On June 23, 1993, JaxFax launched its first edition, which went to 167 people.

A few weeks later it had grown to over 600--which is the first map you see above. One year later, on June 23, 1994, it is faxed to nearly 4,000 individuals. Who are the 4,000 individuals? Clergy--who copy and distribute JaxFax each week to their congregations. Newspaper editors--over 35 community newspapers now who run JaxFax as a

regular weekly column (with over 600,000 circulation). Radio stations--over 20 stations now use JaxFax at least one hour each week for radio call-in and public discussion of the issue(s) raised by JaxFax. Chairs of state Black and Latin political caucuses that get it to their members as well as to other progressive supporters. All members of the Congressional Black Caucus. Union leaders and other worker have created fax-trees (see example at right) or copy and hand JaxFax out to work associates. Community leaders

who make copies and distribute it at leadership and other community meetings.

Why is JaxFax growing so rapidly? Why has it been so successful? JaxFax would like to think it is because we are meeting some real needs. JaxFax keeps Rainbow supporters up-to-date on our thoughts and positions on current issues. It keeps supporters informed on issues important to us. It stimulates action! When we ask you to take action it is not just you alone taking the action. Sen. Ernest Hollings (D-SC) and Rep. Dana Rohrabacher (R-CA) received hundreds of calls

from NRC members who had read about their racially insensitive comments in JaxFax. Both were very angry and called the NRC office protesting the fact that we had people calling them from all around the country. Keep up the good work and remember, JaxFax is growing on you!

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP!

JaxFax now appears in more than 35 community newspapers boosting secondary distribution of the JaxFax to over 600,000! Here is how you can help: 1) set up a Fax Tree (see diagram 1); 2) encourage your local com-

munity newspaper or newsletters to run the JaxFax; and 3) reproduce and distribute it at churches, union halls and community organizations.

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perspective

Tobacco Road: A Superhighway Of Disinformation

At the time the John Steinbeck novel "Tobacco Road" was at the top of all best seller lists in the 1930's Hollywood motion pictures had become the nation's greatest marketing tool for cigarette consumption.

If an actor was agitated, depressed, sick or dying, a cigarette was immediately pressed into his or her mouth -- and a deep, orgasmic inhalation produced a beatific expression of ultimate satisfaction (a 'calming motoricity' it's called).

John Steinbeck's novel described the miserable life of southern tenant farmers whose tragic existence depended on the success of the tobacco crop. While, today, the life of the small farmer is no bed of roses, the

larger operators and the corporate giants with their vertically-integrated enterprises are doing quite well thank you.

Wendell Berry, a well-known social commentator and a farmer himself (and a farmer smoker) has this interesting advice, quoted from his new book 'Sex, Economy, Freedom & Community' (Pantheon Books #20.00, 173 pp.) "The people who so eagerly condemn them for growing tobacco should be just as eager to help them find alternative crops...It is wrong to condemn people for doing a thing and then offer no alternative but failure. A person could get mad about that."

Well, other people also could get

mad, like, say for instance it has been suggested that billions of American taxpayer money should be spent on bailing out third-world farmers who supply the cocaine, heroin and hashish--make them respectable. Do you get the idea that Mr. Berry, who is from Kentucky, is a tobacco farmer who has seen the handwriting on the wall? Maybe that's why he charges so much for such a little book of miscellaneous essays.

More to a worrisome point, the fine (and ugly) art of "gene manipulation" once again is seen to be heavily involved. Appearing before the house sub-committee on health, tobacco company executives were caught lying, fabricating, hiding the truth and otherwise displaying a facade of contempt for the American public. Brown and Williamson tobacco Corp's top executive, Thomas E. Sandefur Jr., was simply amazing with his blatant

denial that nicotine is addictive.

Though the unrepentant Sandefur insisted that his company adjusts the level of nicotine in cigarettes only for taste the committee was able to spring a devastating surprise on the hard-pressed executive. A 1976 corporate study was presented: "The importance of nicotine hardly needs to be stressed, as it is so widely recognized...Inner need is characterized as smoking to achieve psychological benefits such as to relieve stress and to aid concentration". Isn't that what I was saying in that first article here, 6/15?

Equally devastating for the "rats-cals" was the revelation by Food and Drug Commissioner (FDA) David Kessler that the tobacco companies were using a genetically-manipulated strain of tobacco plant grown in Brazil (1/2) that delivered "twice as much nicotine to a smoker." FDA investi-

gators found a Brazilian patent for this dangerously addictive new plant in the name of Brown and Williamson -- and growing on a farm owned by 'Santa Cruz Overseas', a sister company. Oh, what a "tangled web" these villains weave.

Several facts should be noted: The parent company of Brown and Williamson is 'British-American Tobacco Company' with extensive South African investments and an intense marketing campaign on that continent. The congressmen on the health subcommittee who are from tobacco-growing states tried repeatedly to force Commissioner Kessler to reveal his sources -- they get big campaign bucks from the tobacco companies. It would seem that within the structure of this industry, we have a number of the kind of people my mother used to describe as having "no conscience, like well-bred snakes."



By Professor McKinley Burt

Civil Rights Journal

What Is The Fourth of July To African Americans?

BY BERNICE POWELL JACKSON

Thirteen years before the Emancipation Proclamation Frederick Douglass, the great abolitionist and orator, delivered a Fourth of July speech in which he pointed out the hypocrisy of this country's celebration of Independence Day while it still held million in bondage.

This year, as the whole world has celebrated the freedom of South Africa, African Americans have had a bitter-sweet feeling of joy for our brothers and sisters in South Africa and sadness that 131 years after the Emancipation Proclamation, we still are not free in our own country.

Some would argue that African Americans are free--that the Emancipation Proclamation provided that. But for nearly a century after that document, African Americans in many southern states were prevented from the most basic tenet of any democracy--the right to vote. Some would argue that African Americans were free with the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965, which ensured the right of African Americans to vote. But until the passage of a strengthened Voting Rights Act in 1990, only two African Americans from the South were elected to Congress in 71 years and few were able to be elected to county and state legislatures or to be judges.

Some would argue that African

Americans were free with the Supreme Court Brown vs Board of Education decision which ended school segregation and began the integration process for other areas as well. But the fact is that although integration has worked for a few positive role models, few businesses and services, poor education and a declining housing stock.

The reality, as we celebrate yet another Fourth of July, is that many African Americans are still slaves in America. We are slaves to violence. According to the Children's Defense Fund, homicide is now the third leading cause of death for elementary and middle school children and since 1979 more children have been killed by firearms than soldiers killed in the Viet Nam War. Black children are planning their funerals instead of their proms and three quarters of black adults worry that their children will not live to become adults.

We are slaves to poor education. Many city school systems are almost completely attended by children of color. Meanwhile, one of the dilemmas corporate America now finds itself in is that increasing numbers of high school graduates can barely read or write or compute and thus, the quality of our work force is declining. In many of our larger cities fifty, sixty and even seventy percent of young people drop out of high school before graduation. Too many of our young people are discouraged from succeeding in school--ostracized by their peers for having "white" values and not expected to do well by teachers and

school systems which too often have low expectation for African American youth.

We are slaves to poor health care or no health care at all. African American children die at the same rate as children in some third world countries. Our people face higher incidence of cancer, hypertension, heart disease and diabetes and often have fewer options for medical care. AID has increased by 185 percent among heterosexual African American women over the past year alone and in New York City 90 percent of all children with AIDS are African American or Latino. Yet African Americans, even those with the best insurance are less likely to receive the best or most up-to-date treatments, whether it be for heart conditions or AIDS.

We are slaves to an economy in which there are millions of unskilled, untrained African America workers whose strong backs and ability to pick cotton or assemble cars are no longer needed by society. Unemployment rates in the African American community can be nearly double that of whites and many African Americans have simply stopped looking for work and are no longer counted as unemployed. While a small percentage of African Americans have prospered over the past two decades, millions have been lumped together into the so-called underclass, where they feel abandoned by society and hopeless about the future. Generations of African Americans are living on welfare and children grow up not knowing anyone with a job.

Frederick Douglass reminded him-

self of the mournful wail and the bleeding children of his recent ancestors in that Fourth of July speech nearly a century and a half ago. Let us remember those chains and our children as this country celebrates Independence Day once again. And let us also hear Douglass' words once more as well:

For it is not light that is needed, but fire; it is not the gentle shower but thun-

der. We need the storm, the whirlwind and the earthquake. The feeling of the nation must be quickened; the conscience of the nation must be roused; the propriety of the nation must be startled; the hypocrisy of the nation must be exposed; and its crimes against God and man must be denounced.

And let us remember that until all of us are free, none of us is free.

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