

OPINION

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Demand Healthy School Lunches

For healthier children

BY ELLIE HURLEY

Given all I know about food and food systems as an adult it seems slightly funny that as a child, with parents who diligently packed me a brown bag lunch every day, I was jealous of the kids who ate school lunch.

I wanted the pizza, the sloppy joes and the tater tots -- and not my crummy turkey sandwich on whole grain bread. I suppose that's because I, along with many Americans, had yet to learn the real impact of unhealthy food on children.

Today, children and their parents are much more educated about what a poor diet can do to a child. As we see childhood obesity and diabetes rise, particularly in poor communities,

mandating healthier foods, but their call to action opens the dialogue about what healthy food really is and who deserves it.

Everyone deserves access to healthy food, especially our children. It's important that the Child Nutrition Act includes, at a minimum, not only free lunch for low income students, but also free breakfast and funding for summer feeding programs.

Healthy food is food grown primarily locally, minimally processed and with the sustainability of the earth in mind. Food grown close to home is not just good for our personal health, its good for our economic health and our environmental health as well. The closer the food is produced to the plate it ends up on, the lower the carbon foot print that is left. And producing food close to home means support-

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the link between nutritious food and healthy children is more visible than ever.

While I may have pined away for a slice of grade D sausage pizza from the cafeteria, kids today are actually fighting for the healthy food my parents packed me. Recently in my home town a group of fourth graders planned an "eat in" to protest the school's unhealthy lunches. The students are part of a group called Boycott School Lunches and while their eat-in was canceled due to pressure from the school administration, student boycotts are taking place in other areas.

The student push for a healthier school lunch could not come at a better time. The Child Nutrition Act, which lays down the guidelines for the National School Lunch Program, is up for reauthorization and it's important to note that those most affected by school lunch policy are calling for change. They might be de-

ing local farmers and local small businesses, which is something I think we can all get behind in these trying economic times.

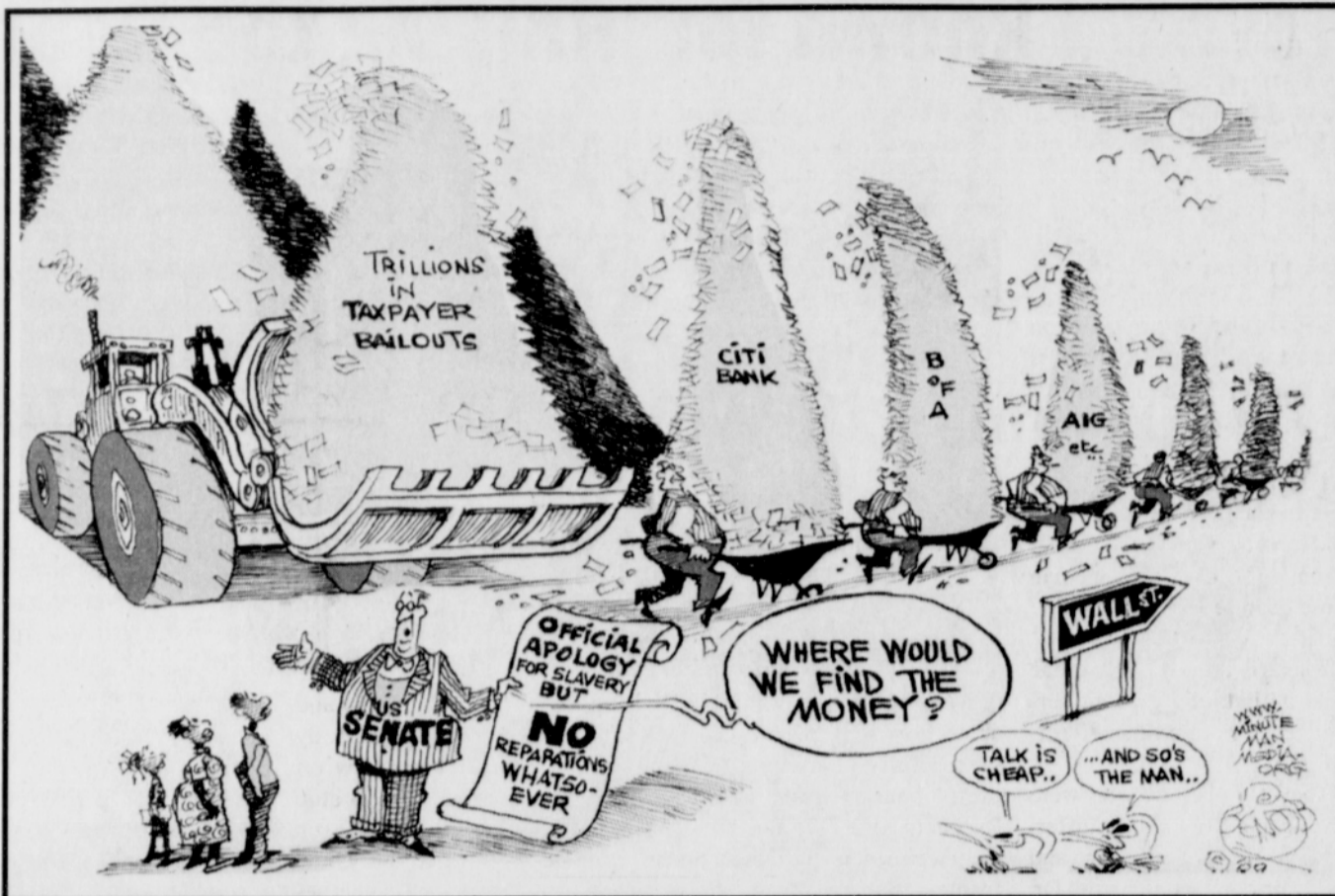
So, to bring it back to the kids, it's not just about feeding them nutritious food, its about teaching them what nutritious food is, where it comes from, and how to grow it and cook it themselves. It's an understanding I didn't have as kid.

I knew what I was eating, but didn't grasp the greater implications. Kids nowadays seem to get it, at least a lot of them. It's time to get behind their movement and call for holistic change in the Child Nutrition Act.

This is our chance to push for and get healthy and local school lunches for all children.

Please call your representative in Congress and urge support of healthy school food locally sourced in the re-authorization of the Child Nutrition Act

Ellie Hurley is the communications coordinator of World Hunger Year.



Obama Must Stand Up and Fight

Seize the moment for change

BY RON DANIELS

When President Barack Obama took office after a brilliant and historic election campaign, there were great hopes that he would utilize his margin of victory and enormous popularity to usher in an era of "change you can believe in."

Though it is far too early to predict the ultimate legacy of his presidency, there are troubling signs that rather than boldly and robustly articulating and fighting for his policy proposals, Obama is emerging as a cautious pragmatist who is more obsessed with "bi-partisanship" than seizing the moment to create substantial change in this country.

President Obama's most critical lack of leadership thus far has been the failure to stand up and fight for his signature pledge to deliver health care to the 47-50 million people who are currently uninsured.

As a State Senator in Illinois, he embraced a Single Payer system as the most cost effective and efficient way to deliver health care for all. And, though I have consistently argued that progressives must

build a movement strong enough to create the political space for Obama to operate, the converse is also true.

President Obama could use his position to educate the public on the merits of particular policy prescriptions and aggressively mobilize grassroots support for the proposals he's advocating.

This is certainly true when it comes to the issue of universal health care.

A recent New York Times/

sors. Moreover, there is a vibrant movement called Health Care Now which is mobilizing significant public support for HR 676 around the country.

Given Obama's stated views on Single Payer, these factors would seem to offer an ideal opportunity for him to educate and lead on this issue.

Instead of choosing to support Single Payer, he has settled on a hybrid formulation which includes a "public option" within a system that will include

Payer has merits but has been unwilling to stand up and fight for it.

His initial posture was to take what seemed like an uncompromising position in favor of a public option. In his most recent press conference, however, he refused to draw a line in the sand in favor of a public option as a component of the legislation he would be willing to sign.

When the strategy should be to fight first and compromise when necessary, Obama has apparently capitulated before putting up a fight.

Therefore, the outcome is predictable; the insurance companies will carry the day. There will be no public option in the "bi-partisan" plan which is adopted. Millions of Americans will secure health care coverage. Unfortunately, it will be within a system that is ultimately doomed to crash from spiraling cost to the government and taxpayers because the program will be tailored to meet the pecuniary needs of the insurance industry rather than the health care needs of the people.

This outcome could be avoided if President Obama were willing to stand and fight!

Dr. Ron Daniels is president of the Institute of the Black World 21st Century and a distinguished lecturer at York College City University of New York.

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CBS News poll revealed that "Americans overwhelming support substantial changes to the health care system and are strongly behind one of the most contentious proposals Congress is considering, a government run insurance plan to compete with private insurers." This is the "public option" feature in the bills being advanced by committees in the House and the Senate.

Obviously many progressives prefer HR 676, the Single Payer bill sponsored by Congressman John Conyers which has more than 70 spon-

plans offered by the insurance industry.

Frankly, having a meaningful public option as the single-payer component of the final bill would be an acceptable fall back position. But, there is a danger that the public option will be shelved. The Republicans and the insurance companies hate Single Payer and see the public option as a Trojan Horse, which will ultimately evolve into a Single Payer system.

What has President Obama's strategy been as the debate rages in the Congress? On occasion he has hinted that Single

Hudson Miracle

BY JIM HIGHTOWER

The National Transportation Safety Board has now issued its official review of "The Miracle on the Hudson" - the US Airways flight from New York City that struck a flock of geese, lost all power, and was forced to land in the Hudson River last January.

NTSB's analysis confirms what we learned from news reports at the time - Capt. Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger and the rest of the crew on Flight 1549 performed marvelously in the face of looming disaster, saving the lives of 150 horrified passengers by landing the jet intact and quickly evacuating it. Their performance has been hailed with such phrases as "stoic," "nearly flawless," and "heroic."

But another laudatory term should be applied to them as well: "union." Practically everyone involved in averting this disaster was a union-trained professional.

Captain Sully himself is not only a member of the Airline Pilots Association, but also served on its national governing committee and is APA's



former safety chairman. Indeed, he and his union have had to fight airline chieftains who've tried to cut back on the safety training programs that allowed him

to save those lives. Likewise, the cool-headed flight attendants who so expeditiously moved those nearly-panicked people off the plane, are members of their union, the Association of Flight Attendants, which also stresses safety.

The ferry crews that zipped into action, skillfully and quickly maneuvering their boats right up to the wings to rescue passengers - they're in the Seafarers International Union, which gives them the safety courses that enabled them to respond as they did.

The cops, firefighters, and air traffic controllers also performed marvelously - all union trained.

At a time when corporate interests in all sectors of our economy are trying to eliminate unions, remember Flight 1549 - the union-made miracle on the Hudson.

Jim Hightower is a national columnist.

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