



# THE ONE MINUTE LEFT

Fall Term, 2007-2008 - VOL. 6, NO. 1

## FINALS EDITION!!

### UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE PROGRAM NECESSARY FOR UNITED STATES

by Michael Schreiber

With presidential elections looming, it is important to understand the pressing issues of the day; of these, the inadequacy of healthcare coverage is perhaps the most important.

#### THE PROBLEM

Healthcare in the United States is no longer the best in the world, at least for some citizens.

Health coverage can no longer be offered by most employers, and so-called "buy in" options are often unaffordable.

As a result, many people either are not covered by insurance or have insurance that offers few benefits or substandard care.

Since healthcare is a problem

for so many, the only real solution must be a nationalized healthcare program. This nation requires a universal, single-payer, socialized system that finally offers good health as a right equal to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

As it stands, the United States is a member of an exclusive group – the highly developed nations lacking a universal health program.

In fact, the United States and South Africa are the only remaining industrialized nations that fail to provide universal access to healthcare.

Our economically advanced allies in Canada, France, and the U.K. all enjoy equal access to national healthcare programs, whereas the

United States, the supposed exemplar of industrialized success, fails to provide in this crucial area.

This failure to provide universal health coverage results in Americans paying over twice what others in industrialized nations do for healthcare per capita.

#### MEDICARE AND MEDICAID

The U.S. does pay to provide care to certain groups, but the current system of providing limited coverage to the poverty-stricken and elderly is in fact a huge waste of federal funds.

The government subcontracts private insurance companies to provide care to these groups, which, according to the Physicians for a National Health Program, results in "a fragmentary payment system that entrusts private firms with administration, ensuring the waste of billions of dollars on useless paper pushing and profits."

This money could be better spent on expanding the programs to include more uninsured.

The two programs that the government has put in place, Medicare and Medicaid, are also underwhelming in terms of the benefits they offer.

While these programs do cover some medical costs, financial burden for medical care still falls upon the patients themselves.

It is easy for a person to feel cheated by these "government" programs; the money goes out in the form of taxes, but little actually gets back to those who need it for healthcare. Only a socialized, single-payer system would efficiently redistribute the tax money fairly.

#### PRIVATE INSURANCE

For those who do not qualify for these programs and are

not extraordinarily wealthy, the burden of providing care for family members is even worse.

Even those who pay for insurance find their coverage is often limited; it may not include optical or dental coverage, or it may be severely restricted due to preexisting conditions.

Many people simply go without healthcare until minor problems become emergencies, replacing cheap preventative measures with expensive emergency care and causing hospital overcrowding.

A national healthcare program would allow primary-care physicians to assume more of the burden.

#### PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES

Presidential candidates often discuss this healthcare issue, but only those who really address the problem with a socialized system of providing care are worthy of consideration.

The best platforms are those that seek to expand the Medicare and Medicaid programs while also cutting out the middlemen, the private insurers who waste money on redundant levels of administration and advertising.

The best platforms also take steps to gradually shift to a socialized single-payer system, with the priority of first providing healthcare to all individuals.

#### CRITICISM

Those candidates who reject national healthcare as an option often cite the high cost of providing this care and the effect on the (heavily lobbying) insurance sector as fatal flaws in the solution.

These detractors also mention the increased demand for healthcare they allege would inevitably occur under a universal plan.

#### THE TRUTH

What these candidates fail to point out is that, while taxes certainly would have to be higher, there would be no need to pay unpredictable insurance premiums or co-pays.

Rather, families would know how much they must spend on healthcare each year and would be able to budget accordingly.

Under progressive taxation, the wealthiest individuals would be responsible for most of the burden, while the poorest individuals would be heavily subsidized.

The insurance industry would certainly lose business, but the extra productivity gained in all sectors by having a healthy workforce would be sure to preserve the solvency of the economy.

Finally, while demand for health services would likely increase as uninsured individuals begin to seek care, most of the increased demand would be absorbed by the underutilized and easily expanded primary healthcare provider system.

The "moral hazard" argument that people who do not have to pay for care will use it frivolously is sophist at best – Just ask yourself when you last went to the doctor for a good time.

Under a universal program, people would go to the doctor when they think they need to, which is a good thing.

Because our current system of providing care is so broken, we must act now to insure Americans and to ensure Americans do not have to suffer another eight years of no progress on this issue.

If steps aren't taken to correct the current healthcare system, the United States is definitely sick.

#### Letter From the Editor

Dear *One Minute Left* readers,

After a hiatus from May of 2006, the *One Minute Left* is returning with plenty of new left-of-center content and a desire to grow.

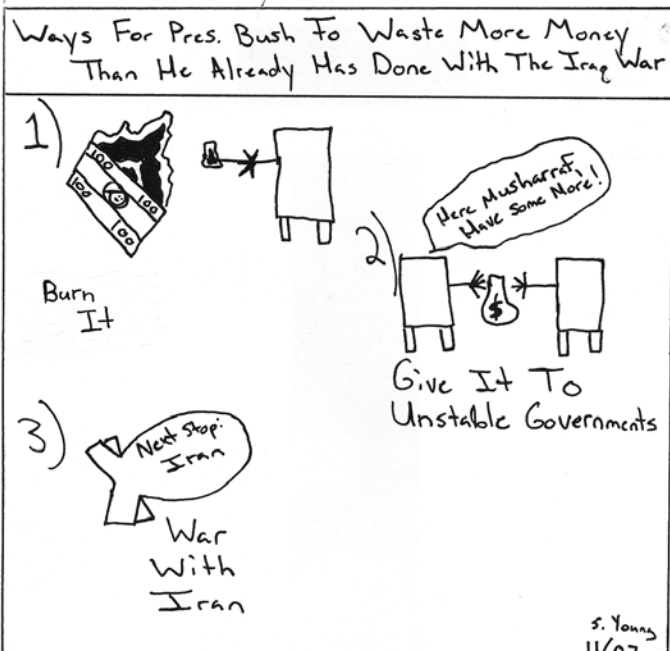
For those of you who are new readers and are unfamiliar with us, The *One Minute Left* is the publication of the Students for Leftist Action, a political student organization here at Lawrence.

SLA is always looking for new members, so feel free to stop by our meetings Monday nights at 10:30 p.m. in the Sage Hall basement TV room.

Also, for more information about SLA, the *One Minute Left*, upcoming leftist events, and links to useful leftist information, please visit our Web site at <http://www.lawrence.edu/sorg/sla/>.

Enjoy our new issue and look forward to more *One Minute Left* each term!

Michael Schreiber, editor-in-chief



#### Upcoming Events

Next term, activist, pacifist, and educator Kathy Kelly will speak on campus. Kelly is co-coordinator of Voices for Creative Nonviolence and is one of the foremost members of Voices in the Wilderness. In 2000, she and Denis Halliday were nominated for a joint Nobel Peace Prize by the American Friends Service Committee. The speech will occur Jan. 31, and there will be a workshop the following day, Feb. 1. Details will be posted soon.

A growing collaboration including Greenfire, Students for Leftist Action, and several outside organizations is planning to bring Chris Paine, director of "Who Killed the Electric Car?" to Lawrence. The film is a documentary describing the numerous troubles plaguing the alternative fuel industry. It especially focuses on the story of General Motors' EV1, and its eventual removal from the market. Chris Paine will likely be speaking on campus in late February. Please contact Greenfire or SLA if you are interested in helping to organize and/or raise funds.

## MOVING FROM APATHY TO INVOLVEMENT

by Patrick Miner

In the life of a twenty-first-century college student, there hardly seems time for anything other than schoolwork and the occasional reprieve in which to seek some measure of sanity.

For years, the average university-aged citizen has been losing interest in politics and government – perhaps for good reason. There is a sense of growing discontentment in political procedures, a film of distracted stratagems that cloaks the basic function of government.

In the 1960s and 70s, political unrest spurred a so-called “counter culture” movement that strived for peace, free thought, and community. In some ways, this progressivism succeeded, while in others, it was held back by what some would consider an overwrought urge to “rebel.”

Indeed, the reforms of the 60s and 70s were countered by conservative ideals, but they were also stifled by their own motivators. What ended this period of civil activism? Great reformers like Martin Luther King, Jr. were brought down at the hands of others, but many people involved in this era continue to go about their lives today.

What ended the will of the people to change their society? To balance the power? To fight for the rights of others?

Citizens of the United States have surely been wronged by the powers that be, but that didn't end the civil rights movement. Citizens against citizens didn't stop the policy-making of the 60s. There was an eventual downfall of activism, something that can't be dated – an internal change

that went unnoticed due to its own implications. Young people, around which civil rights groups and objectives have historically been centered, now play an ever-decreasing role in their own futures.

Now, seven years into a new century, the world faces much of the same conflict it faced four decades ago.

The people of the United States fear terrorism in place of communism. The third world still struggles under various levels of imperialism and scarcity of humanitarian aid. People are still losing their rights, their jobs, their homes, and their lives.

But this will change. With the resurgence of human-, animal-, and environmental-rights groups, activism is on the rise. At Lawrence's most recent convocation, environmentalist and reformer Paul Hawken discussed “the largest movement in the world” – the advent of thousands of NGOs (non-governmental organizations) committed to shaping a better future.

Combined with advancements in communication such as the internet and instant overseas telecommunications, it is increasingly easy to network with others around the world who share the same interests and ethical convictions. This international movement cannot be put out by any one government or power: It exists in many countries and relies on millions of people. If one organization is stopped, it will start again: It is inevitable.

University students and others of this new generation who are coming into adulthood will be

the catalysts for a new future.

How can students and others that wish to learn more about the world around them and its politics advance their knowledge? Universities, colleges, conservatories, trade schools, and other institutions of post-secondary education offer students the chance to further their education in a chosen area, but they also provide opportunities to break from preconceived notions of politics brought about by the mass media and other unreliable sources.

Simply listening to the viewpoints of others and replacing what is to be “believed” with original thought will lead to much progress. Now is the time to reconsider how to think beyond the memorization of names or the grade on an English paper. The application of real knowledge in the world outside the classroom does not have rules or step-by-step instructions: It has consequences and tangible outcomes.

The enrichment of the mind that this university provides is that of communication and new thought.

At this year's first convocation, President Jill Beck discussed the growing apathy of students. She announced the now-operational Web site “My Election Decision” which was co-developed by Lawrence and the University of California, Irvine. This Web site does offer students some insight into the upcoming presidential election, but many candidates and issues are under-represented. As the site recommends, students can research other candidates and issues on their own. Information

### THE ONE MINUTE LEFT WANTS YOU!

The *One Minute Left* is a student-run publication of Lawrence University, with no paid staff, and relies upon the writing of Lawrentians like you to fill its pages. If you have an issue to rant about and want others to hear about it, write:

- \*An Article
- \*A Poem
- \*An Opinion Piece
- \*Prose
- \*Short Fiction
- \*Or Anything to the LEFT



Then submit your piece to the *One Minute Left* by e-mailing it to:

submissions@oneminuteleft.org

Thank You!

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## Educate! Agitate!

is in no short supply. There are debates to be watched, articles to be read, questions to be asked – and yes, even convocations to attend.

This year's convocation series and the release of “My Election Decision” encourage educated voting and political engagement. This initiative by President Beck and others at Lawrence is a helpful step in the right direction.

By this time next year, the elec-

tions will have passed and the new president-elect will be preparing to enter office. Who will have voted? How many citizens will vote without considering their options? Will 2008 yield more than 2004's mere 60-percent voter turnout? Whatever the results, it is certain that with the participation of more students and more citizens in general, this country will move closer to what it ought to be.

## PROBLEMS WITH “CAP AND TRADE” SOLUTION TO CARBON EMISSIONS

by Robert Maas

It is widely, though not universally, accepted that carbon dioxide emissions from automobiles, coal power plants, jet planes, smelting, and a number of other industrial and commercial sources constitute a large share of the greenhouse gases causing global climate change.

Indeed, this concept has become so widespread in the public conscience that many governments and corporations are actively searching for solutions to this growing problem.

One popular solution, implemented broadly in European nations, is known as “Cap and Trade”: The government imposes a cap on the amount of carbon dioxide (or, theoretically, any pollutant) that can be emitted in a period of time, and then issues permits which entitle an economic entity to produce a certain fraction of that total amount of carbon dioxide over a period of time.

These programs have done very little to reduce the amount of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, as “cap and trade” has numerous inherent flaws.

The initial distribution of the credits themselves creates many problems. As this is a government-run program, the government hand out the credits, which means that the best-connected corporations and other organizations, typically those with the best

lobbyists, get the most credits.

Some may counter that this matters very little: After all, the number of credits will create a cost associated with purchasing enough credits to continue polluting. If this cost is more than the cost of updating the production equipment to be more efficient using a different fuel, then the company will upgrade.

This market force would work, if only the issuing agencies didn't have a habit of creating too many credits: *The Guardian* (6/2/07), reported that a credit issuer had produced more than 150 million credits too many, and that many of these credits had gone to energy producers and oil companies.

These companies, having more credits than they needed, could turn around and sell their excess credits at a profit. Thus, the biggest producers not only had no incentive to reduce greenhouse emissions, but also made a tidy profit selling excess credits before flooding the market.

While there may be no such thing as a free lunch, this comes mighty close.

Whereas the obvious solution would appear to be an auction, few countries undertake an auction to sell credits, and many that do only auction off a small percentage of their credits.

With every successive issuance

of new credits, the cap on the total amount of carbon emitted is supposed to decrease. However, an escape clause to this decrease exists in the form of the Clean Development Mechanism, which is implemented by the U.N.

Polluting companies can invest in the development of India, China, South Korea and other nations in technology that actively removes greenhouse gases, and then are rewarded with the ability to pump out more pollutants.

The problem with CDM arises when the U.N. tries to categorize what constitutes removing greenhouse gases from the atmosphere. For example, a number of companies in India, China and South Korea produce refrigerants. In this production, a by-product called HFC-23 is also

produced. HFC-23 is more than 11,000 times as effective a greenhouse gas as carbon dioxide is.

*The Guardian* (ibid.) reported that burning the HFC-23 has netted the refrigerant producers billions of dollars in new profits from the CDM system.

Clearly, burning HFC-23 is preferable to releasing HFC-23 into the atmosphere, but this action hardly constitutes an actual reduction in the amount of greenhouse gases currently in the atmosphere.

Instead, it confuses not releasing incredibly strong greenhouse gases with removal. And by not releasing a very strong greenhouse gas, companies become free to release less intense greenhouse gases, such as carbon dioxide, which will stay in the atmosphere for centuries.

Thus “cap and trade” and the

