



HEALTH CARE PROPAGANDA FROM THE KOCH MACHINE

A study on the cost of **Medicare for All** was recently conducted by **Charles Blahous** for the Koch controlled **Mercatus Center at George Mason University**. The Blahous' study projected that the *Sanders' Medicare for All* system, assuming it was enacted in 2022, would cost the federal government a whopping \$32.6 trillion in excess spending over the course of 10 years. This "study" was greeted with glee by **Fox New, National Review, The Hill, Reason, Washington Examiner, Bloomberg, ABC & CBS News, Time** and more.

However, the Media headlines missed an important point in the Blahous' study -- in terms of federal, state and private spending on healthcare, the *Sanders' Medicare for All* plan is actually projected to cost **\$2.1 trillion less** than projections of spending using the current US healthcare system, though most of the news media mentioned above did not address **Medicare for All** cost-saving explicitly.

If you are ideologically on the Koch Machine payroll you cannot be pleased with a plan like *Medicare for All* that would *increase the share of the cost* paid through taxes, (social security payments) rather than through insurance premiums or out of pocket. Since **Medicare for All** essentially shifts payment for healthcare from premiums, deductibles and co-pays to taxes, (social security payments) anti-tax crusaders like the Kochs and their minions at the Mercatus Center would naturally be opposed. Just as they are opposed to abandoning the rich person's cap on their social security payments because this would unacceptably "un-progress" their presently minimized contribution.

A flat tax is usually very popular with libertarian types like those serving the Koch Machine. A nice idea for rich people to cut their taxes and increase ours, but any such flat tax in social security payments spills the secret that rich people get richer because of legislated privileges like the social security income liability cap, not from pulling their weight realistically. As *Emory University* professor and former Clinton administration adviser Kenneth Thorpe notes pointedly, "**There are going to be a lot of people who'll pay more in taxes than they save on premiums.**" Those people will certainly be at the high point of the income pyramid. This just can't happen in our **Koch-powered kleptocracy**, not as long as their think tanks can feed the Mainstream Media.

The media chorus that complains, dutifully, about how much a program like *Medicare for All* adds to the federal debt quickly fades to a whimper, however, when it comes to enacting trillion-dollar tax cuts for the rich, providing billions in corporate welfare, or fighting endless and fruitless overseas wars with America's \$717 billion-a-year military budget.

The Sanders' Medicare for All plan is too disarming – it very simply aims to remedy cost issues through massive administrative cost reductions by cutting out health insurance middlemen! Not to mention the savings from applying Medicare cost rates independent of the rigged market of the current Health Industry, producing significantly lower costs than private insurance rates thanks to the strength of government bargaining power. The present period has seen healthcare cost continuing to rise faster than inflation.

Medicare for All implementation will enable confrontation with Big Pharma to substantially reduce the cost of drugs. Drug prices in particular have risen by 12 percent annually over the past five years. According to the federal **Center for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS)**, total healthcare expenditures were almost \$3.5 trillion in 2017, or about 18 percent of US GDP. These figures are by far the highest in the world, in both dollar terms and percentage of GDP. And it's getting worse: The CMS estimates that costs will increase an average of 5.5 percent each

year, and that by 2026, total national health expenditure will amount to \$5.7 trillion annually, almost 20 percent of US GDP.

Yet a cursory glance at the Blahous' study would not show this immediately. Blahous obscured his own findings by not displaying the ten-year totals for Medicare for All cost savings in his tables. Adding up the contents of Table 2 of the Blahous' study shows that enacting *Medicare for All* would actually save \$2.1 trillion in national health expenditures over that period. It's as if Blahous saw the results of his data and didn't like them, so he just decided to not publicize them in his table.

Blahous' omission makes sense, however, given the small-government, market-centered political ideology of the Mercatus Center, which is funded primarily by conservative billionaires Charles and David Koch, who have given at least \$9 million to the think tank and tens of millions to their host, George Mason University. The organization was originally founded in 1980 by Richard Fink, a former executive vice president of Koch Industries, and both he and Charles Koch currently sit on its board of directors. Blahous is also a member of the Walton and Scaife family-funded Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

But what makes all this worthy of noisy alarm from rich and would-be rich libertarians in the Koch Machine is that it also plans to provide guaranteed coverage to every American! **For All Equally** is offensive to our would-be Randians who espouse a predatory **For Me Only**. To such Libertarian types, it is unethical to subsidize coverage for the 40 million currently uninsured in the United States, despite the estimation that this actually could cause tens of thousands of deaths annually.

The upcoming failure of Populist White Power Authoritarianism should encourage the establishment of a Democratic Socialist alternative in its wake. This alternative would offer a path to the kind of America that Democratic Socialist Martin Luther King proposed with the first Poor Peoples Campaign – and which now has seen its resurrection in a modern incarnation. This will be no panacea, and in fact open to many objections but it is important that we are **all** recognize that we are **all** on the same planet. (Except maybe Elon Musk.) It is necessary for **socialists** in particular to seize the time, the initiative and the government from the *privateers*.

A Greenfuse Radical Remix™

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P.S. from the Peopleswhistle: Democratic Socialism does have the unfortunate weakness of *majoritarianism*. To paraphrase Eugene V. Debs of recent Mime Troup fame - the "voting" that leads us into the Promised Land can also lead us out. Hence it should be revolutionary socialism at the outset, expanding the Constitution's general welfare clause into a whole new manner of "representation" -- closer to Vandana Shiva's **democracy of all living beings**, an ecological democracy with a "vote" for the frogs and the rest of life and which establishes a veto power for a supreme nature instead of a supreme court.

I know almost as many terms for socialism as I do for liberalism, or that Eskimos have names for fish, or was it snow? The big differences are between the **Social Democrats** sort of socialism of the **Tom Hayden** Democratic Party kind, as compared to **Democratic Socialism** of the Bernie and the Progressives' kind currently surfacing and **Libertarian Socialism**, which has been my kind. In my salad days I called it **AnarchoCommunism** which is the way it came down to me through **Emma Goldman** and **Alexander Berkman**. **Kropotkin** is the teacher here, but Emma is a much better read.

We can't forget **National Socialism** (German) or **Corporate Socialism** (Italian). Then there's **State Socialism** (Russian). Or maybe even a **Race Socialism** (German, Israeli) These are lumped together as **Totalitarian** because they demand total subservience of the individual. Tsk Tsk. But what about a socialism built on guarantee the individual's total needs? This is the kind of Socialism I am increasingly enamored of under the rubric **NeoTotalitarianism**, i.e. the Socialist Climate Dictatorship, i.e. the good old days on the homefront during WWII: ration cards, black outs, victory gardens, war bonds.

This is definitely not Libertarian Socialism and Kropotkin would be very pissed. Kropotkin was a pure "Libertarian" in that he had no use for political/state forms at all and believed that "*The People, Unimpeded, will never be Defeated.*" (I made that slogan up, not Prince Kropotkin.) I would do as the great philosopher . Hannah Arendt, wanted and make Civil Disobedience part of the Bill of Rights. Currently people in Pennsylvania, under frack attack, assert their right to nonviolent direct action

Since I am getting paid for being old, I have had shift my support to the welfare system and perforce must embrace the Nannie State with enthusiasm as befits the workings of the Cognitive Dissonance of a recent convert. Neo is Neo, by the way, because, before, **Big Brother was Watching You**. Uhuh. **Now Big Sister is Watching Out for You**. I'm pretty injured to her moving eyeballs. I am ready to respond to our atomized, abusive, alienated state of things some loyalty to Big Sister. Yes, you will have your nose wiped by a professional. We need a thorough going socialization of our privatized, billionaire sustaining society.

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