

Socialized Medicine

By Dr. Eugene Friedberg

During the past few decades state control has been infiltrating one phase of our lives after another with increasing acceleration. Not knowing and, in some cases, not wishing to remedy the fundamental cause of our economic and social ills, those in power have tried by political methods to eradicate the obvious evils that beset us.

In the beginning the panacea of political planning and control was extended to more or less impersonal and uncomplicated phases of our existence; but of late it has invaded our most personal and private lives. One of the newest of these invasions is in the field of medicine and its numerous ramifications.

The Wagner-Murray-Dingell Bill, now before Congress, would bring about what may be termed "socialized medicine" if passed. A section of this bill proposes to raise annually, by taxation, approximately \$3,048,000,000 to provide medical care under the supervision of the government. This means, in effect, that the bureaucrats who would distribute that money would have sufficient power to control the practice of medicine.

For instance, by spending \$600,000,000 they could pay (and therefore control) every physician in the United States an average salary of \$5,000 a year.

The expenditure of another \$672,000,000 would pay \$5 per day for every available bed in every hospital, and thus give control of these institutions to the state.

And there would still be left over a billion and a half dollars to be used as the bureaucrats pleased.

To detail the many evils that would follow the political control of medical care would require much more space than can be

given a letter, but those who are acquainted with the inefficiency and waste of bureaucratic control in other fields may readily imagine how disastrous it may be in the personal and intimate field of medicine.

Today, it is a fact that the system of medicine in this country has given the people the finest medical care in the world. The faults (and there are many) which are commonly attributed to the system of private medical practice are not due to the system itself but to other factors affecting general living conditions. The only effective way to improve medical care in the United States is to increase greatly the real income of the wage earner. Any other way would only create greater evils.

However, there is another and to my mind an even more important objection to socialized medicine than its wastefulness; it would take us further along the road to slavery and away from freedom. Our freedom of choice would of necessity be much more narrow. To those who believe in the philosophy of freedom as developed by John Stuart Mill, Adam Smith, Herbert Spencer, Henry George, and others, socialized medicine is an insidious attempt to deprive the individual of another bit of freedom "for his own good."

Everyone who believes in the sacredness of the rights of man should recognize these sappings of our freedom and fight them constantly. Eternal vigilance is indeed the price of liberty.

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