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The second American Revolution

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The reverberating town-hall meetings are a legacy of the 1765 meeting in Boston where Samuel Adams and the Sons of Liberty organized against King George III and, not having access to the Internet, later started the Committees of Correspondence that alerted all the colonists to insistent royal threats to their personal liberties. During a secret meeting in Virginia, Jefferson helped organize such a committee in his state.

Here and now, as the president decrees that health-care costs must be cut severely, Medicare officials — before there is a final bill from Congress — have been planning to slash payments to many specialists.

“Cardiologists would be especially hard hit,” reported The New York Times on Aug. 21, “with cuts of more than 20 percent in payments for electrocardiograms and 12 percent for heart stent procedures.”

Said Dr. John C. Lewin, chief executive of the American College of Cardiology: “Cuts of this magnitude could cripple cardiology practices and threaten access to services for millions of patients.”

It is because of the life-saving work of cardiologists, over the years, that I am alive and able to write this — and applaud the 150 cardiologists and more than 1,500 patients who organized a health-care rally in downtown Orlando, Fla., on Aug. 21 to protest these Medicare cuts scheduled to take effect Jan. 1. The cuts involve (NYT, Aug. 21) “a variety of standard heart procedures, in some cases by more than one-third” in addition to the two I cited.

Three days before, at a town-hall meeting organized by the wives of two Louisville physicians to directly protest the portents of Obamacare, the invited keynote speaker, Wesley Smith, an internationally known advocate for human rights in health care, expected to talk to maybe 100 people. At least 1,000 Kentucky citizens were there for an event conceived only two weeks before.

According to Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid, those citizens must have been among the “evil-mongers” drowning out national debate with “lies, innuendo and rumor.” But Smith tells me that no organization put together the Louisville protest. “People showed up because they are very engaged as citizens about one of the most important domestic policy initiatives in recent times.”

To many of us, including doctors, it is THE most important issue. Marc K. Siegel, a practicing internist and an associate professor of Medicine at New York’s BYU Langone Medical Center — with which my doctors are associated — writes:

“For generations, we doctors have promised our patients that medical advances will allow us all to live longer, more comfortable lives. Now that these results are finally arriving, ‘health-care reform’ — or ‘insurance reform’ (as our would-be health czar now calls it) — could snatch the rug out from under us.”

If the president succeeds in having Congress enact into law a national federal council to decide the most cost-effective medical care, those national standards will necessarily override which specific care can be most effective for each individual patient. Is expressing that concern, even loudly — about being lost in the abstract whole — what House Speaker Nancy Pelosi calls “un-American” as she scorns these citizen eruptions by latter-day sons and daughters of liberty?

Obviously, there is great need to make health care more equitable, but what Obama’s Democratic loyalists are leading us toward has been clearly and ominously described by Michael Gerson (“When Planners Decide Life,” Washington Post, Aug. 21).

To counter inefficient, costly medical decisions, Gerson writes, by imposing a national structure “gives government extraordinary power. And the approach taken by planners is, by necessity, utilitarian — considering the greatest good for the greatest number. (Such) decisions cannot be made on a human scale.”

We are all individuals!

Siegel adds on a very human level: “Anyone who’s been saved from cancer by the latest targeted chemotherapy treatment, had a lung or breast cancer diagnosed early by a CT scan or MRI or returned from the brink of a heart-related death thanks to the newest drug-treated stent understands that some expensive care is well worth the price.”

Throughout our history, we’ve been tested by Jefferson’s question: “Who will govern the governors?”

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