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Nat Hentoff: President cons us into accepting Obamacare

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ALARMED by the continuing angry and fearful distrust of Obamacare by more than half the electorate (rasmussenreports.com, June7), the president has assembled a team of loyalists, including - the June 7 New York Times reports - "a new tax-exempt group that will spend millions of dollars" in advertisements extolling Obamacare to save incumbent Democrats from defeat in the midterm elections.

Among his allies are labor unions and two groups I used to respect, Families USA and the AARP. And I have seen two frightening full-page ads in The New York Times by the American Medical Association condemning the Senate for going on vacation "without fixing a scheduled 21percent cut to Medicare payments to doctors. ... A cut that threatens to deprive millions of seniors and military families access to doctors they depend on."

These expensive ads did not mention that the AMA supports Obamacare. Nor, of course, does it speak of the inevitable rationing of health care now that Obama has appointed as head of Health and Human Services, Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS), Dr. Donald Berwick, a rapturous supporter of Britain's National Health Care Service, which is so bureaucratically intent on cost-effectiveness that - as health care expert Michael Tanner of the Cato Institute demonstrates:

"The United Kingdom government has effectively put a dollar amount to how much a citizen's life is worth.

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To be exact, each year of added life is worth approximately \$44,305 (30,000 British pounds)" (The Daily Caller, May 27). The rationing of lives also includes citizens of any age whose cost of survival is more than the government is willing to spend. In all the ads you'll be seeing from now on heralding the wondrous rewards of Obamacare, any reference to the dread word, "rationing," will be impossible to find. With rigorous face-saving logic, the president begun this campaign to protect Democratic candidates in the midterm elections by focusing his oratorical skills on June 8 at - as The New York Times reported the next day - "a center for older Americans in Wheaton, Md., where he took questions from the audience and by telephone from around the country ... a public relations blitz by the White House and its allies, aimed especially at the elderly, who tend to turn out heavily in elections and are among the most skeptical of the bill."

Obama adds cash to his soothing words. Already,

The New York Times adds, about 80,000 checks for \$250 have been sent - from the 4million checks to arrive this year - to the elderly as a rebate to help them pay for prescription drugs. Also, he has said: "By 2020 this law (Obamacare) will close the doughnut hole" (in prescription drug coverage) completely."

I expect that before then, Berwick and the cost-efficient 160 boards and health agencies under government control will have begun to design and implement the impersonal rules of health care rationing. This being so falsely "transparent" an administration, we are not likely to find out what the costs of each year, as we age, will be permitted by the Obama administration.

There are Americans - like me, having reached 85 in June - who are not going to be won over by the Obama-care-is-good-for-you blitz. Former Washington columnist for the National Review, Philip V. Brennan, author of "Death by Obamacare"

(canadafresspress.com, June8), begins by telling of a heart attack the week before in the United States. He was quickly admitted to the hospital. He had "a bunch of costly diagnostic tests ... given the best up-to-date care available ... I was there for three days, carefully monitored ... I shudder to think what all this excellent care would cost me if it weren't for my insurance coverage, part of which included government-funded Medicare."

When I was a kid, firemen, doubling as emergency care providers, rushed into my home and removed my father, who had had a sudden heart attack. I knew, though this was during the Depression, he would get very good care. And he did. A traveling salesman, he went back on the road. My father told me later there had indeed been a family history of heart trouble. Barack Obama wasn't even born when the firemen saved my father. My dad was lucky.

Nat Hentoff is a member of the Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press, and the Cato Institute, where he is a senior fellow.

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