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# RAHN: Political plunder - again

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If President Obama and Congress have their way with the so-called health reform bill, the American people will have had their pocketbooks and liberties plundered once again. The basic purpose of government is to protect individuals and their property and to ensure their liberties. However, Congress and most other legislative bodies spend the bulk of their time doing just the opposite. They take, primarily through taxation, from one group of people what those people worked hard to produce and give it to some other politically favored group. They pass a never-ending series of regulations, which chip at our liberties until little is left.

Without the rule of law, property, economic opportunity and liberty cannot be protected, so we have been taught to revere the law. One hundred and sixty years ago, the brilliant French political and economic theorist Frederic Bastiat warned us in his classic, "The Law," that the rule of law would be perverted. As he noted, the law "has acted in direct opposition to its proper end; it has destroyed its own object; it has been employed in annihilating that justice which it ought to have established, in effacing amongst Rights, that limit which was its true mission to respect; it has placed the collective force in the service of those who wish to traffic, without risk and without scruple, in the persons, the liberty, and the property of others; it has converted plunder into a right, that it may protect it, and lawful defense into a crime, that it may punish it."

No better description of the effects of the proposed health care reform bill can be made than what Bastiat described. If it is signed into law, the American people will lose part of their self-defense against disease by not being allowed to go to those who can best care for them, and they will be denied by the new government regulations those procedures, devices and drugs that would save lives, because they will not be developed. Despite President Obama's oft-repeated pledge not to increase taxes on those making less than \$200,000 a year, the bill

is filled with tax increases on precisely those who he said he would not tax. The response from the administration and its congressional cheering squad is to deny that a tax is a tax - George Orwell's "Animal Farm" is here.

The proposed plunder is hardly noticed by many because they have come to believe that government plunder is proper and right because it is so common. We have become used to politicians taking our hard-earned assets and giving them to their favorite groups. Where was the outrage when the centuries-old right of bondholders to be at the head of the line in bankruptcy reorganization was given to Mr. Obama's friends in the labor unions in the Chrysler and General Motors government takeovers? According to the Tax Foundation, the average American works five months a year (to the end of May) to pay his taxes to the government. To the extent that this taxation provides little benefit or protection to the taxpayer because of government waste, mismanagement or pure income redistribution, the taxpayer is, in effect, being made into a tax slave.

There have been many articles recently about the fact that most government workers make far more than their private-sector counterparts. My colleague Chris Edwards of the Cato Institute has calculated that when all of the employee benefits are properly included, federal government employees, on average, receive more than double their private-sector counterparts, who, unlike federal workers, can be fired. Again, hardworking taxpayers are being plundered to subsidize an overpaid federal work force.

Members of Congress tell us they are concerned about the lack of jobs, yet their own jobs bill contains tax increases on multinational corporations and others who wish to invest in America, meaning less investment and fewer jobs. If they really wanted to increase jobs, the solution would be simple: Cut the taxes on employing labor and on productive work. But it is all about power, not job creation or economic growth. When Congress seizes your money, it claims to be creating jobs by giving it to someone else who did not earn it. There is more honesty among those in the Mafia, who at least do not try to claim they are stealing from us for our own good.

Congress is not content just to plunder us. By running up unsustainable deficits and debt, it is plundering our children and grandchildren. All of those who are underage and cannot vote are being taxed without representation.

Most people tacitly accept the political plunder - even though intuitively they know it is wrong - because their own representatives say they (through earmarks and subsidies) will plunder others to give to them. It is a devil's deal - with a very bad end.

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