Health Care in a Phantom Democracy

Contributed by Jan Lundberg
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If Money Can't Buy Love, Can It Buy Health Care?

In 2002 I wrote The Health Care Tribe, but not in response to high health care costs. Rather, my concern was that people need to take care of one another: family, friends, neighbors. Sounds a little odd for the U.S., does it not?

Low cost health care, or rather medical care as it really is constituted, is not a benefit if healing is not the purpose. "Getting better" perhaps -- through treatments purchased -- is what's hoped for, even for the rich. In their case, life is sometimes extended through great expense, but is it worth living hooked up to machines? Democracy has come to mean the poor too are on multiple legal drugs, with side-effects requiring still more drugs.

More and more middle aged people in this nation look and feel like they are older: out of shape, and sometimes in the grip of chronic illness. The ultimate direction is early death. Health is a puzzlement to most people, just as buying a large house may or may not present structural or other flaws: surprises can happen, so we throw money at it and hope for the best. Too bad it doesn't work with the body. What does work, for the petrochemical pharmaceutical makers, is an increasingly addicted generation of sufferers.

Before we can solve this worsening scam, though a tribal community approach, one must take personal responsibility to care for one's body. Garbage in, garbage out. Get the garbage out through detoxifying. [Fasting treatise is below under Further Reading - ed.]

Injecting self-care and community-care into the current "health care debate" requires redefining the power of the individual and the concept of community. If a maximum of community is desirable, tribal bonding (i.e., organized mutual aid) ought to be considered ideal, because less community through employment or other servitude results in a sham of community.

As innovative and effective as the Health Care Tribe concept may be, it cannot compete with big bucks from the capitalist medical/insurance establishment. Although we can reach many people with the health care tribe concept, and a few of them might implement it, we are almost entirely shut out of the national public discussions -- not just on health but on everything. This is how our "democracy" works. It is not an accident or a flaw; it is deliberate.

When money and powerful interests dominate, there is no democracy. If you agree with the accuracy of that assessment, you must entertain the possibility that there has never been democracy under the U.S. system.

Yet we repeatedly try to participate in the phantom democracy, for we have little other recourse that would not be in some way embarrassingly pointless or suicidal. Our futile efforts at exercising real democracy are as sad as someone trying to elicit love from a heartless family member who has power enough to never relent.

On many a front -- climate protection, safeguarding public health from radiation poisoning, and the lack of health care -- society shows it is dominated by the merciless, selfish bosses and puppet masters. How many more fronts need to be opened up before people see the hopelessness of the increasingly warped U.S. system and begin to establish the next society on the community level? It would greatly harken back to older, proven ways and principles.

The formation of tribes will happen, but it's well nigh impossible to make them work within the present order's chaotic but rigid deterioration. Nevertheless, the best preparation one can make for future survival is not "the dream solar power installation" or even "a great piece of land" but rather the creation of a tribe that can make it through societal collapse. The Health Care Tribe is a start, because our physical health is necessary for anything else we want to be possible.

This essay was initially titled "Can We Get Health or Health Care in a Toxic Non-Democracy?"

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Note: a version of the above will be in my forthcoming book. - JL

Further Reading:

"Elder Care 'Insurance': Health Care Tribe" was written by Jan Lundberg,
Culture Change Letter #8, in November 2002. Author Daniel Quinn, author of Ishmael, pronounced the concept "Intriguing."

Read the original article at culturechange.org/e-letter-8cont.html

"Brown Shirt Tactics & Health Care Reform" by Skip Wenz [with commentary by Jan Lundberg]:

culturechange.org/go.html?505

"Fasting for healing and inner peace", Culture Change Letter
#92, at culturechange.org/e-letter-Fasting92.html

The Farm in Summertown, Tennessee, established a midwifery center in the 1970s, and it is highly respected beyond the former commune:

thefarmmidwives.org