

The Doctor's Bill Comes Due

Having weathered the Russian frame-up, the Republicans must now produce a health-care plan.

by Conrad Black



The Democrats and most of their media hallelujah chorus are still sanctimoniously congratulating themselves for showing such vigilance over Russia's impact on the election. The more impetuous are denouncing the attorney general, William Barr, as a flimflammer, and the more imaginative are trying to make the flying broad jump to health care. Here the president's supporters are often also disconcerted that he has raised the issue. This may be unfair to some of them, but it is easy to get the impression that they think that since all the administration has been able to do is repeal the coercive part of Obamacare, they should leave it at that.

The fact that Texas was successful in getting a judicial declaration of the unconstitutionality of what remains of the Affordable Care Act requires the federal government to defend

the (federal) law in question before the Supreme Court – or not. There seems to have been some disagreement in the Trump cabinet about this. But the administration, which was partly elected to “repeal and replace” Obamacare and was badly failed by the Republican leaders in the Congress, cannot now profess to uphold the remnants of that legislation against the Republican governor and legislature of Texas, the most populous Republican state.

A moron can see that nothing will pass Congress before the election unless a few compromises could be made in areas of shared interest, such as infrastructure, but the Republicans can't go back to the country with no health-care proposal at all. The Democrats are stuck with Obamacare. Most people don't like it even without the coercive feature. The promise to keep your plan and doctor, and the promise of steady fees, were all lies, and tens of millions of Americans remember that. They also remember the hypocrisy of the Republicans in Congress, who voted many times for repeal of Obamacare when they knew President Obama would veto their measures but chickened out when President Trump proposed repeal.

The Democrats are now, as a party, pretty much fully embarked on the advocacy of completely socialized medicine. This is effectively what “single-payer” means: You pay a health-care premium to the government and the government pays according to a scale to the medical profession, who effectively become civil servants and are valued equally, regardless of relative competence and diligence. It is like getting your treatment from the United Auto Workers, with the same likely result – poor medical care and bankruptcy. The government guarantees the doctors' receivables, but their incomes are tightly capped, and the entitlement of everyone to equal care leads to overcrowding of waiting rooms. Not only the needful but every hypochondriac and lonely person crowds in, especially if, as is the socialist model, there is no user fee. Waiting lines become unmanageable, as has been the case in Canada and Great

Britain. It is disturbing that any serious person would urge the Republicans to ignore this issue, which affects everyone in the country, and go back to the voters with the threadbare laurel that coercion is gone but John McCain, in the last (and most churlish) act of his career, sank reform.

The good news for Republicans is that not only is Obamacare impossible, and not only is it relatively easy to come up with a better plan, but the Democrats are charging into the socialized-medicine minefield, cock-a-hoop. This is not a reticent bit of fine print, to be conceded to local television interviews that only sleep-deprived people watch between 3 and 4 a.m. This is the battle cry of Bernie Sanders, Beto O'Rourke, Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren, and others. This could be a terrible graveyard for the Democrats. The doctors are a very powerful political group; everyone has a doctor, and doctors have a great deal more ability to influence large numbers of voters than do the Hollywood half-wits, flying in their private jets to survey the state of the oil sands and padding their extravaganzas of collective narcissism with kindergarten-level political incitements to the viewers (if any).

In straight political terms, this is a splendid opportunity to design a health-care plan laden with promise and not costed with austere conservatism. The Democrats are stuck on the bridge between the present unsatisfactory and bedraggled state of Obamacare and the Sanders et al. consensus of nationalized, socialist medicine. Faced with such an unprepossessing alternative, the president and the health and human services secretary should commission serious experts to produce the best plan they can find that covers those who receive inadequate care but spreads the cost of it as equitably as possible. The 75 percent of Americans who have substantial coverage don't need anything except assurance that the government won't deprive them of the care they have. This was the point where Obama and his entourage lied, and the

Republicans in the Congress lied also, promising to repeal and then cringing and waffling. Their only excuse, and it is a contemptible one, is that it was the start of the administration and they were sitting on their hands waiting to see if their president was a stooge of the Kremlin. That didn't play well in the 2018 midterms, and now is the time to put forward the Obamacare alternative and tie the Democrats to the mast of trying to defend that fiasco or take the plunge into socialized medicine.

Despite the health-care discussion, even in the second week of the Democrats' post-Russian-collusion convalescence, they are still like an insect that has just been blasted from an aerosol can of insecticide: buzzing about more purposefully than ever in the political St. Vitus's dance that precedes surrender to physical realities – in this case, the disaster of their false alarm. Even now, only 29 percent of Americans, according to a reputable poll, feel that the president has been cleared. In their flight from the starkness of their own revealed calumnies, the Democrats are threatening to subpoena the entire Mueller report, including all supporting material.

Let us all grasp the absurdity of this: They claim to be prepared to demand that the attorney general execute a subpoena against himself and the special counsel, Robert Mueller, to reveal material that they are cooperating to release after obeying the statutes governing criminal procedure, including the Bill of Rights, and national-security legislation, that require some information to be withheld, and releasing everything else in about two weeks. The attorney general has no legal requirement to release anything except the special counsel's findings and his own. He has undertaken to remove only what he is required by law to withhold, and the president, who has a right to review the report before it is published, has waived that right and authorized the attorney general and special counsel, sight unseen, to release as much as they legally can as soon as they can. It looks like a hell

of a cover-up, all right.

In general, we all sympathize with anyone who has suffered a severe defeat. Every experienced person knows the unpleasantness of a nasty setback. But this pathological attachment of most Democrats to their massive defamation of the president, built on unconstitutional politicization of the intelligence services, the FBI, and the court for foreign-intelligence surveillance, deserves no sympathy. As the current malignant inanities of Congressmen Nadler, Swalwell, and Schiff are completely exposed as unutterable hypocrisy, the leaderless Democrats, already reeling from the collapse of their pretense that there is no crisis at the southern border, will have to try to make their nominating process, a mass marathon of the unfeasible, look like a serious method of selecting a presidential candidate.

The fluctuation in the comparative fortunes of Donald Trump and the Democratic party in the last three years could not have been imagined, and could hardly be more complete.

First published in the