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## **Four Arguments against Socialism, including Medicare**

**by Jacob G. Hornberger**

Senior citizens are frightened over the possibility that President Obama's health-care plan will adversely affect their Medicare coverage. Their attitude reflects how socialistic programs have converted a once-proud, strong, and independent people into weak, frightened, dependent wards of the state.

The first argument against any socialist program, however, is the moral one — that it's wrong to take what doesn't belong to you. Moreover, the immorality of an act cannot be converted into something good or moral simply because the state is doing it on your behalf.

Consider Medicare. Embodying the socialist principle "From each according to his ability, to each according to his need," Medicare uses the force of government to take money from one group of people — those who are working — in order to pay for the health-care costs of another group — senior citizens.

Wouldn't you think that such an important moral principle as "Thou shalt not steal" would be something important for senior citizens to think about, especially given that, statistically speaking, they're closer to death than everyone else?

A second argument against any socialist program is that it just doesn't work. Let me repeat that for emphasis: Socialism doesn't work, not even when American politicians and bureaucrats are running it. It inevitably produces crises, which are then used as the excuse for more government intervention. Moreover, it is inordinately expensive, as Americans have discovered with Medicare, much to their dismay.

A third argument against any socialist program is that it destroys the independence, fortitude, strength, and moral fiber of the people. How can a people be strong and independent when they have become frightened, dependent wards of the government?

Look at the senior citizens who today are so frightened of losing their Medicare coverage. Unlike our American ancestors, who rejected socialism, today's senior citizens look upon the federal government as their provider, their caretaker, their parent, even their idol. That's why socialism is often called paternalism — because it causes people to look upon the government as

their parent, one who is taking care of his children by ensuring that they have an education, health care, retirement pay, and so forth.

When Lyndon Johnson proposed Medicare in the 1960s, he knew exactly what he was doing. He had seen what his mentor Franklin Roosevelt had done to the American people with Social Security, a socialistic program whose ideological roots stretched back to 19th-century German socialists.

For more than 100 years, Americans had lived a way of life in which they kept everything they earned and decided what to do with their own money — save, invest, spend, donate, et cetera. The thought that government should take care of people or force people to care for others was anathema to our ancestors.

There was neither income taxation nor coercive redistribution of wealth. Our American ancestors wanted no part of the socialism that was sweeping the rest of the world. They placed their faith in themselves, freedom, free markets, and God. The result was not only the wealthiest society in history but also the most charitable. It also produced the finest health-care system in the world — one without any government involvement.

Along came Franklin Roosevelt, who understood that if he could just get Americans dependent on socialism, they would never be able to wean themselves off it. His actions were much like those of a heroin dealer — get the customer dependent on the heroin and he'll be a nice and docile supplicant forever.

Johnson knew that Medicare would do the same thing. Judging from the deep-seated fear of today's senior citizens that their Medicare coverage might be tampered with, who can argue that Johnson was wrong?

A fourth argument against socialism is that it turns into a war in which everyone is doing his best to get into everyone else's pocketbook, while doing everything he can to protect his own pocketbook from being plundered. As Frédéric Bastiat put it so well, under socialism the government becomes a great fiction by which everyone is trying to live at the expense of everyone else. How can a society survive when everyone is warring against everyone else?

There is only one real solution to all this. It requires people to regain their faith in themselves, in freedom, in free markets, and God. It requires that they reject socialism and uproot the faith they have placed in the state and in coercion. It requires a repeal, not a reform, of all socialist programs, including Medicare.

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