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\$6.2 Billion Bonanza for Two Top Medicare Thieves

Privatized Medicare, known as Medicare Advantage (MA), now enrolls more than half of the country's 65 million Medicare beneficiaries, accounting for 51% of the eligible population and 54% of total federal Medicare spending. While privatization was a hope of the capitalist class since the inception of Medicare, the privatization of Medicare gained substantial momentum this century - skyrocketing MA enrollment from 19% in 2007 to a massive 50% in January 2023.

MA plans, also known as Medicare Part C, offer an alternative way for HMOs and PPOs to receive government subsidies out of the Medicare social fund which was originally earmarked to guarantee the right of the elderly to health care.

The privatization of Medicare received a big impetus under the Affordable Care Act, which encourages the process by offering bonus payments to insurance companies with the clout to get in on MA plans. According to an analysis published by the Kaiser Family Foundation on August 9, two healthcare giants - UnitedHealthcare and Humana - account for a staggering 47% of MA enrollment and will receive a remarkable 49% of the total bonus payments. For 2023, UnitedHealthcare is projected to receive \$3.9 billion bonus dollars and Humana \$2.3 billion, amounting to

an astounding \$6.2 billion dollars for UnitedHealthcare and Humana combined.

These figures are a testament to the concentration of power in the industry. Monopolization of healthcare by a tiny cohort of giant multi-billion dollar conglomerates has already dramatically changed the healthcare landscape. Independent physicians are being ejected along with special service providers such as school-based clinics, non-profit and public hospitals, and other facilities which traditionally provide health care services for the poor and underinsured.

Minimizing and denying care to enrollees is the operating principle of these multi-billion dollar conglomerates that have restructured the health care system along the lines of managed care. Managed care offers enrollees a package of benefits for a set premium. Since these revenues are fixed, the only way to maximize the profits beyond the level already extracted from the super-exploitation of the healthcare workforce is to cut other costs - namely, health care services. Thus, administrators are directed to deny referrals to specialists, patients are kept waiting weeks for appointments, and vital procedures are simply denied, etc.

These developments have brought the contradictions of the for-profit health care system to the bursting point. The tremendous monopoli-

zation of the industry reveals the high degree of socialization of economic life. A modern medical infrastructure combined with a large treasure of trained health care workers is organized into vast, nationwide networks able to provide all the needed services for hundreds of millions of people. Yet rather than meeting the needs of the people, this national resource is set in motion and used with the sole aim of maximizing profits for the capitalists.

The privatization of Medicare also increases government spending and creates an accountability void. While overhead for Medicare and Medicaid is only 2% of total costs, the private sector conglomerates implanting themselves into those programs siphon off between 33% and 50% of the publicly sourced monies as profit and administrative costs.

Furthermore, privatization of Medicare and similar social programs poses an enormous threat to their status as essential rights and entitlements. Rather than being produced as services fitted to and capable of meeting the needs of the population, instead of being produced to suit the natural purpose of health care as an inalienable economic and human right that every human being is entitled to simply by virtue of her/his humanity, these services are transformed into commodities.

Palestine Uprising

As the nationwide uprising of the Palestinian people continues, increasing numbers of the American people are shuddering in horror at the U.S. government, which remains the source and instigator of Israeli aggression and colonialism.

At this time, the whole Palestinian nation has risen, demanding and fighting for its rights – fighting against Israeli colonialism. The Palestinian people are fighting to regain their sacred national rights, including their right to live in their own independent Palestinian state. For its part, Israeli colonialism – financed, armed, and propped up by U.S. imperialism – has tried to strike down every last manifestation of this struggle of the Palestinians.

Day after day, the people across Palestine have come into the streets in their hundreds of thousands, defying the West Bank curfews and challenging the guns of the Israeli Defense Forces. General economic and political strikes have spread to villages, towns, and enclaves not only in the West Bank and Jerusalem but also inside the pre-1967 borders of Israel as well.

Repeatedly, the dauntless Palestinians have set up barricades, preventing the Israeli patrols from entering their towns, and arresting their comrades, waging pitched street battles, in which the Palestinians match their fists and stones against the guns and tear gas of the aggressors.

Grassroots committees have been established to direct the uprising and to organize basic services (such as food, water, and medical supplies) which have been cut off by the Israeli occupiers. All over the world the Palestinian people, who have been driven into exile and emigration, as well as all of progressive

world public opinion, have rallied to support the uprising.

Every crime of the Israeli colonizers - from carpet bombing and collective punishment today, to decades of forcible displacement and annexations - has been carried out under the full maintenance of U.S. imperialism. The Israeli bullets are paid for by the U.S. government which supplies Israel with \$10 million a day in economic and military aid. U.S. officials continually shuttle back and forth between Washington DC and Jerusalem, discussing their bilateral political, military and economic strategy for defeating the uprising. The U.S. government, defying American and world public opinion, repeatedly demands that Israel fulfill its “obligation to maintain law and order,” i.e., its “right” to continue its forcible subjugation of the whole Palestinian nation.

Today the uprising has brought the Palestinian liberation struggle to a new plateau and the whole world is denouncing U.S.-backed Israeli aggression and extending support to the Palestinians. On one side stand the Israeli colonialists and their sponsor, U.S. imperialism. On the other side are the valiant Palestinian people and their liberation struggle. We should all

resolutely support the Palestinian uprising and fight with all our strength against U.S. imperialism's maintenance of Israeli colonialism. Now, when the imperialist media is more and more blockading the news about Palestine, it is all the more important that the class-conscious workers and anti-imperialist activists go widely and deeply amongst the people in order to bring them forward into the struggle against U.S.-Israeli colonialism and in support of the Palestinian revolution.

In fact, the American workers and people require a complete alternative to the entire war program of the capitalist class and the two major political parties. This alternative can only be achieved through a united and determined struggle against the capitalist ruling class. The task of building up our genuine working-class political party and independent organizations opposed to war and militarism is essential for the development of this struggle. Participating in this struggle and building such organizations is the true alternative to the capitalist war program, and it is the path to taking the leadership of the anti-imperialist, anti-war movement into the hands of the people whose aspirations it is meant to represent.

Editor: Anne Beck

In August we published a Special Edition of The Worker to coincide with the launch of our new campaign slogan. The campaign is going well so far! Members and supporters of the Workers Party are encouraged to participate in the campaign by reciting the slogan with others in any language of their choice while shaking hands and looking into each other's eyes. Here it is: "If you are illegal, then I am Illegal!" Do it with love in your heart. We are looking forward to even more write-ins and reports about how how many new friends you convert or simply to tell us anything you'd like to about your experience with it.

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