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Health care: a comedy of errors?

Maureen Fiedler | Feb. 26, 2010 NCR Today

I often chuckle out loud at some of the statements made in the current health care debate. Even yesterday, when the discussion at the ?Health Care Summit? was at least civil, some Republicans continued to repeat their best laugh lines. For example, they talked about a ?government take-over of health care.? As someone who wishes the government *would* indeed ?take over? health insurance with a single payer system, I just laugh out loud when I think about the bill they call a ?government takeover.?

And then there are the comic props. Like the 2,000-plus pages stacked on top of each other, as if one could do comprehensive reform in an abbreviated form.

But at the heart of all this debate is the quest for the common good. That?s a top value in the Catholic moral tradition, and many others. It means -- among other things -- concern for those with pre-existing conditions who can?t get insurance, for those summarily dropped by profit-gouging insurance companies when they get too sick, and for the 30 million-plus who have no insurance at all.

The Democratic legislation and President Obama?s amendments, go only part way toward dealing with those problems. But at least they *try* to deal with them. I have yet to see evidence that the Republicans even want to tackle these issues. Their plan does not deal with pre-existing conditions; they don?t want ?too much? insurance company regulation, and they show little interest in covering everyone.

The real rub may be: adding people to the rolls requires subsidies, which cost money. Where to get the money? At least in part, from those at the higher end of the income scale. Some call this ?income redistribution.? I call it policy for the common good.

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