

Catholic exemplar wrong on health care debate

Michael Sean Winters | Aug. 13, 2009 NCR Today

A couple of weeks back, I wondered why someone with such an illustrious reputation as [Princeton Professor Robert George](#) [1] would agree to appear on the Glenn Beck show, especially after Beck had just that morning accused President Barack Obama of being a racist. But, hey, we all make mistakes and what with advance scheduling, and busy summer travel schedules, maybe Professor George did not know of Beck's outrageous remarks.

Alas, the Glenn Beck appearance now appears mild.

The American Principles Project was founded by Professor George. Its Web site identifies him as "one of America's foremost scholars in the fields of constitutional law, ethics and political philosophy," although my conservative friends question his intellectual output and increasingly his intellectual rigor.

Now, alas, we all must question his intellectual honesty. His [Web site features a video](#) [2] put out by something called LetFreedomRing. The video focuses on the effects of "government-run health care" on the elderly, and highlights a group of elderly folk in need of a variety of health care services which are denied because the government has decided that they are too old, and they are going to die soon anyway, so why not let Grandma go sooner rather than later.

Of course, there is this thing called Medicare. Not only is it the exact embodiment of the much-maligned "government-run health care" it is also the exact embodiment of a single-payer system, the even more maligned "socialized medicine." Everyone knows that including, presumably, one of our nation's foremost scholars of political philosophy. But, I am eager to see what this scholar of ethics has to say about fraudulent "contributions" to the political debate such as the one on his Web site.

I need scarcely point out that Professor George is a darling of groups that tout Catholic Identity as if it were a political hammer rather than a profound religious commitment. Yet our bishops have declared health care a basic human right and -- provided the current reform proposals do not advance abortion -- they are wholeheartedly in favor of health care reform. Surely, Catholic organizations that were denouncing Notre Dame for granting an honorary degree to President Obama will likewise insist that someone like Professor George who dissents so publicly, and so recklessly, and so dishonestly, from the church's teaching should also be denied any honors from a Catholic institution. I am not holding my breath.

For the crowd of Republicans First/Catholics Second, Professor George is now an expert and an exemplar. But spare us the bit about expertise in ethics. His latest contribution to the health care debate is fraudulent. He should be ashamed of himself, if he has any shame.

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[1] <http://ncronline.org/node/14230>

[2] <http://www.americanprinciplesproject.org/blogs/video-grandma-meet-politicized-health-care.html>