



Zero Waste Institute Newsletter

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The Zero Waste movement has much in common with the healthcare movement.

Recently, the struggle over a national reform of health care has dominated the news. From the reports I have seen, the American people are solidly in favor of regarding health care like a right of citizenship. The politicians are trying to tell them that what is best for them is to bolster the insurance industry, even to the point of making it a crime, punishable by a fine, to not buy health insurance. In the teeth of the snow job coming from the politicians, the preponderance of people insist that they want a single-payer form of insurance, paid for by a state or federal central government. The health care insurance industry on the other hand, by spending gobs of the black profits that the government has assured them for decades, has bought out lobbyists, Congresspeople, the White House, and television, radio and newspaper owners. These in turn have created Astroturf groups. These are small, marginal groupings that pretend to have robust public support. They are artificial grassroots movements pumped up by trickledown money from the industry who sell fear like candy.

So what does this have to do with Zero Waste?

The differences are in quantity but not so much in kind. Zero Waste also faces a wealthy set of industries determined to keep their profits flowing. Not by denying care and laughing at the death and suffering that that causes but by insuring that the rape of the planet and its resources runs on apace and denigrating the efforts by anyone to improve or upgrade or intelligently redesign planetary stewardship. The garbage industry works hand in glove with manufacturing to pursue a shortsighted campaign for maximum profits no matter what the cost. Hardly different from the health care mess!

Looking further, both situations have a common way of solving problems. Ignore them, and let the victims languish a while longer in their misery. The politicians aren't suffering, the industries aren't suffering so no one worries about the death of the planet or the death of uninsured sick people. The resource recovery group is perfectly content to project recovery of one percent of some fraction of garbage, letting the rest continue to stream into dumps. Similarly, the health care reformers have no trouble accepting the

idea that 20% of the American people have no access to doctors for years or decades more.

Zero Waste is an application which can eliminate almost all of the garbage from a product line, by changing the way the product is designed, rather than begging consumers to “please change your ways”.

Of course, in another sense, these two situations I am comparing are each nothing but a microcosm of the way that the American economy is set up. Is it any different when a financial industry orchestrates a housing bubble that ends up mounting their own profits to the skies while they chastise people losing their incomes and their houses as having brought it all on themselves by their own greed? Or a war industry that banks its gigantic profits while gloating at the bombed out innocents and the ruined cities? Is this anything but the standard model of American business? Find a victim and exploit their ruin for all it's worth with the eager complicity of government power?

In both cases, we, the public, must never be allowed to even *ask* the basic question.

That is what Zero Waste has to do with the fracas over health care.

**Do you know anyone else who would like to get this newsletter.
Send me their email address to add to the list.**

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