



Written by [Thomas R. Eddlem](#) on March 27, 2010

Dingell: Healthcare Law Will “Control the People”

Democratic Congressman John Dingell of Michigan accidentally let slip a truth about Obama’s new healthcare package to a Detroit radio talk-show host, telling the host that the new health-care law will “control the people.”

Asked about the people who will supposedly die as a result of lack of healthcare prior to the new healthcare law becoming fully effective, Dingell stated:



“Let me remind you: This has been going on for years; we are bringing it to a halt. The harsh fact of the matter is when you are going to pass legislation that will cover 300 [million] American people in different ways it takes a long time to do the necessary administrative steps that have to be taken to put the legislation together *to control the people*. You know, the Republicans have spent a lot of time not participating, not helping, carping and delaying. But at the same time they have contributed nothing to this and made no offers whatsoever as to what it is they want or what they stand for.” [Emphasis added.]

The longest-serving member of the House in U.S. history, 55 years and counting, Dingell has been called the [“Dean of the House”](#) for his tenure. But in a March 26 on-line live chat with the *Detroit Free Press*, Dingell [claimed](#) that the above language was meant to describe insurance companies, and not “people”:

“If one were to listen to the entire interview, and not just a clip creatively chopped up for political gain, it is obvious that by ‘people’ I was referring to the insurance companies who we must do a better job of overseeing.”

Let the reader decide from the context of the quote:

It’s worth noting that the second part of Dingell’s original radio interview wasn’t completely true. The Republicans did indeed delay passage of the healthcare package this time around, but it’s not true that they did not contribute to the legislation. Even Dingell admitted as much in the subsequent *Detroit Free Press* chat, where he [wrote](#):

“While the bill ultimately did not have any Republican votes, it certainly contains a lot of



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Republican ideas. And I am proud of the fact that I continually tried to work WITH my Republican colleagues to include them in the process, even when they ultimately chose not to participate.”

The truth is that many – even most – Republicans have long sought federal control of healthcare. In a March 25 entry on the Nixon Center’s website, former aide to Republican President Richard Nixon (and former comic actor) Ben Stein noted that Nixon tried to get even more centralized federal healthcare legislation passed in the waning days of his Presidency. Stein [bemoaned](#) that Nixon and the Republicans weren’t getting their due credit for federalization of health care:

“But among the glorying, there was little or no mention of my former boss, Richard M. Nixon, and this was a monstrous wrong, one of an innumerable number of wrongs directed at Mr. Nixon. The flat truth is that in February of 1974, with the hounds of hell baying at him about Watergate, with a national trial by shortage underway after The Arab Oil Embargo, with the economy in extremely rocky shape, and with large Democrat majorities in both houses of Congress, Republican Richard M. Nixon submitted to Congress a national health care bill in many ways more comprehensive than what Mr. Obama achieved.

“Mr. Nixon’s health care plan, sent up to Congress in early February 1974, would have covered all employed persons by giving combined state and federal subsidies to employers. It would have covered the poor and the unemployed by much larger subsidies. It would have encouraged health maintenance organizations. It would have banned exclusions for pre-existing conditions and not allowed limits on spending for each insured. I know a bit about this because I, your humble servant, as a 29 year old speech writer, wrote the message to congress sending up the bill.”

The Nixon plan was even more draconian and “socialist” than the plan Obama ultimately adopted, Stein [argued](#):

“In many ways, the bill was far more ‘socialist’ than what Mr. Obama has proposed. It certainly involved a far larger swath of state and federal government power over health care. Please remember that this was 36 years ago, when middle class Americans still had some slight faith that government was on their side.”

As if to prove the point, last August the *New York Times*’ socialist columnist Paul Krugman [wrote](#) a column extolling the socialist virtues of Nixon’s plan:

“Nixon’s proposal for health care reform looks a lot like Democratic proposals today. In fact, in some ways it was stronger. Right now, Republicans are balking at the idea of requiring that large employers offer health insurance to their workers; Nixon proposed requiring that all employers, not just large companies, offer insurance. Nixon also embraced tighter regulation of insurers, calling on states to ‘approve specific plans, oversee rates, ensure adequate disclosure, require an annual audit and take other appropriate measures.’ No illusions there about how the magic of the marketplace solves all problems. So what happened to the days when a Republican president could sound so nonideological, and offer such a reasonable proposal?”

While a small number of Republicans — led by [Representative Ron Paul, a medical doctor](#) — have long sought to restrict the federal government to its constitutional limits, most of the “mainstream” Republicans have long had little quarrel in principle with the idea of healthcare being managed by government. After all, the Republican-led Congress [shepherded](#) the largest expansion of Medicare in under the George W. Bush administration in 2003.

The lesson Dingell failed to learn is that Republicans have historically not tried to engage in big-



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government programs and control the American people. The difference — and the reason for much of the Republican intransigence during the recent health care debate — is that they want to be the party directing the control.

Thumbnail photo of Congressman Dingell: AP Images

Hat tip for this story: Lew Rockwell's [indispensible blog](#)

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