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Is history repeating itself? [1]

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America seems to be drifting back in history in a sort of time machine. The backlash against admittedly rather limited free market reforms by George W. Bush, exerted by the status quo left, is gaining momentum. If the polls in the run up for the presidential elections are correct, the 'ownership society' could soon be hit by a severe blow. If one of the Democratic hopefuls gets elected, Santayana?s rule is unlikely to be escaped: those who ignore historic failures are prone to repeat them. Such is the case with the old whore of universal health coverage, favoured vigorously by Hillary Clinton, John Edwards and only haphazardly rejected by Barack Obama.

Remember, this is a policy introduced in Britain in 1908 at a time when socialist movements were surging through Europe. Leading Democrats are advocating this concept hundred years late. Is this what Americans get from the collapse of the Soviet Union? The current concept seems even more collectivist than the collapsed HillaryCare of 1993, which nearly derailed her husband's presidency.

Compulsory and comprehensive health insurance for everyone is expensive and would likely deepen the financial crisis in health care even further. It is also inadequate in times when Americans are in perfect control of up to 50% of their health risks, which renders comprehensive insurance obsolete. What is really needed is catastrophic, no-frills health insurance for everyone. That's the kind of safety net the late 19th century European reformers had in mind. And it would be much cheaper and therefore more affordable for consumers.

However, in the freest country in the world compulsion is unlikely to work. Look at car insurance: Despite being compulsory up to 15% of drivers in the US ? depending of the state, but higher in the West ? don?t care about car insurance. Ironically that is about the same percentage of 'free riders' in the yet not compulsory US health system!

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