

INTRODUCING “*THE CUI BONO*” RULE

With this issue of Starting Points we are making a formal introduction of the “Cui Bono” Rule to all our readers. “Cui bono” is Latin for “Who Benefits”. The use of the rule is a tool or basic component of systemic analysis. As with all tools, the rule allows us to accomplish other things. Basically, the use of the rule equips us to assess what we are reading, hearing, seeing in the various media and to begin to understand the effects of the policies, programs and practices of government on any level, of corporations, international organizations, etc.

Instead of reacting to what we see, hear, experience, etc. in terms of what we like or dislike, what we agree with or disagree with, etc. the Cui Bono Rule invites us to continually ask: “Who benefits” from whatever is being presented. What is the “purpose” of what we are examining, looking at, being shown? Cui Bono moves us beyond our first reactions and our looking at things in terms of where we are. Rather the Cui Bono Rule asks us to understand the impacts of what is being done, of what is being proposed in terms of who will benefit...and, of course, who will not. It continually moves us to see “why” something is being proposed...and not only in terms of the immediate descriptions or answers we are being given (told).

This is not a simple task. It means that we look at the what, the who, the why and the when of whatever is being presented...and the benefits to whom for each of those. It means we move beyond first reactions, our own personal experiences and histories, our opinions and preferences. It is a different type of analysis.

For example, let’s look at the difference between universal health insurance and universal health care. And the way these two different health providing possibilities are talked about and presented. On the surface, it would seem that both are about providing health care to everyone. On the surface, it would seem that both are about providing equal health services to each and all of us. We hear and read about different proposals being put forth by different political candidates. Lots of proposals...but how much analysis? But *Cui Bono? Who benefits?*

When we begin to ask the Cui Bono questions, we begin to see other aspects of the two proposals. We begin to be able to evaluate the ideas, the structures, the funding mechanisms in a more wholistic and realistic manner.

Universal health care means the following:

Universal means everyone

Health care means that it is the care about which we are talking.

Universal health insurance:

Universal means everyone has health insurance

It does not tell us anything about what is covered in that insurance

It does not tell us about co-pays, denied treatment, etc.

It doesn’t talk about the cost of the insurance and who would/should pay for it.

When we apply the Cui Bono rule, we also add the following:

Universal health care:

Everyone will benefit by having the access to the care
Health care providers, including hospitals, doctors, etc. would benefit by receiving direct payment for services provided.

Universal Health Insurance:

Insurance companies will benefit because they will be receiving the funding for the insurance.

Insurance companies will be deciding who gets what care
...and how much of that care
...and what will be the money cost for the care
...and who will pay.

Insurance companies are for-profit companies

The profit has to come from somewhere

In this case, whoever is paying for the insurance.

The profit also goes to someone

In this case, the shareholders

Unlike not-for-profits or government systems

Where the money goes back into the organization

And the work of the organization

The health care/health insurance situation is an example, a good one, but just an example of the application of the Cui Bono Rule. Is our goal for everyone to have insurance? Or is our goal for everyone to have health care?

In the coming months, especially as we go through all the campaigning and primaries and then the national elections, there will be all sorts of reporting as well as all sorts of policies or ideas being presented to us. Much of it will be irrelevant to the real issues with which we need to deal as a country. Much of it will be fluff, distractions, clutter, call it what you will.

So first we need to ask ourselves:

Cui Bono: Who benefits from the media not creating the space and the reporting of the *ISSUES*.

Then we need to ask ourselves: how do we think about the real issues before us as persons, as families, as communities and as a country? And then with each suggested answer, with each possibility and/or idea, learn to ask, as the filter of evaluation:

Cui Bono: who will benefit from whatever program is being suggested?

And who will not benefit?

Cui Bono: who will benefit from any policy change that is being promoted?

And who will not benefit?

Yes, it will take practice to ask the Cui Bono question and apply the Cui Bono Rule. It will take time to always ask: *Who benefits?* It might even take some cultural stretching to be able to ask what might be an uncomfortable question. But I am confident that together, if enough of us begin to ask and follow the rule all the time, that applying Cui Bono Rule might become one of the most important works of our time.