

## Pure class warfare, with extra contempt

By Paul Krugman

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The Senate version of Trumpcare – the Better Care Reconciliation Act – is out. The substance is terrible: tens of millions of people will experience financial distress if this passes, and tens if not hundreds of thousands will die premature deaths, all for the sake of tax cuts for a handful of wealthy people. What's even more amazing is that Republicans are making almost no effort to justify this massive upward redistribution of income. They're doing it because they can, because they believe that the tribalism of their voters is strong enough that they will continue to support politicians who are ruining their lives.

In this sense – and in only this sense – what we're seeing now is a departure from previous Republican practice.

In the past, laws that would take from the poor and working class while giving to the rich came with excuses. Tax cuts, their sponsors declared, would unleash market dynamism and make everyone more prosperous. Deregulation would increase efficiency and lower prices. It was all voodoo; the promises never came true. But at least there was some pretense of working for the common good.

Now we have none of this. This bill does nothing to reduce health care costs. It does nothing to improve the functioning of health insurance markets – in fact, it will send them into death spirals by reducing subsidies and eliminating the individual mandate. There is

nothing at all in the bill that will make health care more affordable for those currently having trouble paying for it. And it will gradually squeeze Medicaid, eventually destroying any possibility of insurance for millions.

Who benefits? It's all about the tax cuts, almost half of which will go to people with incomes over \$1 million, the great bulk to people with incomes over 200K.

So, is this bill good for you? Yes, if you meet the following criteria:

1. Your income is more than \$200,000 a year
2. You have a job that comes with good health insurance
3. You can't imagine any circumstances under which you lose that job or income
4. You don't have any family members or friends who don't meet those criteria
5. You have zero empathy for anyone else

The set of people who can check all these boxes is not a winning political coalition. But Republican leaders believe that their voters are tribal enough, sufficiently walled off from information, that they'll ignore the attack on their lives and keep voting R – indeed, that as they lose health care, get hit with crushing out-of-pocket bills, see their friends and neighbors face ruin, they'll blame it on Democrats.

I wish I were sure that this belief was false.