

Martha's Monthly

March 2006

Warning: Reading warnings may make you lose your common sense

If you watched the Olympic coverage on CBC even a tenth as much as Martha and Henry did last month, then you saw many commercials for sporting goods and shiny, new vehicles. Nearly every commercial included some stunt with small print at the bottom of the screen warning the viewer: "these are professional stunt people performing this under controlled conditions. Do not attempt." And lately, every cup of coffee Martha has bought has been accompanied by the warning: "Contents are hot". Now Martha is not one to drink tepid coffee nor attempt head-over-heels jumps on her skateboard. She would most assuredly never drink her coffee *while* skateboarding. So she wonders whom it is that needs reminding that coffee is hot and skateboards have the potential to leave you broken and bruised. Perhaps, she thinks, it is people like Premier Ralph Klein who need such obvious things pointed out. After all, he did release his Third Way plan for privatizing healthcare this week.

It would seem to Martha that it is rather apparent that one drinks coffee hot and goes to a doctor without a credit card. Do we really need the obvious, that healthcare is a public good, pointed out? Perhaps, just for Premier Klein, Martha will point out some things he should have kept in mind over the last month:

1. **A consultation involves consulting people.** It takes much more than a month and must involve more than a vague request to "call your MLA". For ideas about how to conduct a consultation on health care, refer to the [Romanow report](#). They spent 18 months, had 35 staff, heard from tens of thousands of real people and determined that health care should not be privatized. Better yet, Premier Klein, just read the Romanow report to see how to improve health care in Alberta without privatizing it.
2. **Teenage pages are volunteers in the Legislature and are not to be struck, even if you are "frustrated".** When people strike other people they are charged. Remember the man that pied you, Mr. Klein? He was charged. You should have been when you threw a book at a teenage girl who volunteers to deliver your notes to your colleagues. (See [news report](#))
3. **The rich may get better meals in better restaurants, better seats on the plane, and better mustard on their hot dogs, but they do not get better health care.** And the rest of us that are not rich actually think that is a Fair Way, not the Third Way. And there are more of us. Many, many more of us.
4. **Many things can be sold cheapest in a free market: coffee, skateboards, and Grey Poupon. Health care cannot be sold in a free market because, while you can say no to Grey Poupon without long-term results, you cannot say, "pass" to stitches or a new hip.** Private care increases the costs because there is a new cost: profit. In Canada we

spend about \$4411 per person on health care. In the US, where the rich can pay to jump the queue, the per capita spending is \$5635.

5. **Women have the most to lose under for-profit care.** Let's see, women live longer than men and make less money than men over their lifetime. Women give birth to babies and due to lack of funding for birth alternatives this is almost all done inside a hospital. Women are more likely than their male counterparts to provide elder care, childcare, and care of the ill. So, women are more likely than men to require health care, have less money to pay for it, and more likely to have to mop up the mess when people are ill but can't afford care. Therefore it is women who are most at risk from the Third Way.

Premier Klein might have been better advised to have put a warning after his Third Way announcement: *The Third Way is meant to reward the rich for being so damn rich. All non-rich need not apply.*

Today is **International Women's Day**. The Women of Alberta need to say NO WAY to Klein's Third Way. Premier Klein has given just one month to provide feedback. So send on this email to him today and make sure to CC it to the long list of MLAs below (all the women + a few others). Consider sending it to everyone you know and ask them to forward the letter onwards. Unless we stand up and say NO WAY to Premier Klein his Third Way will be the New Way and no fine-print warnings will help us avoid that!

Please copy and forward the following letter to: premier@gov.ab.ca, edmonton.centre@assembly.ab.ca, sherwood.park@assembly.ab.ca, edmonton.beverlyclareview@assembly.ab.ca, lethbridge.east@assembly.ab.ca, calgary.shaw@assembly.ab.ca, lesser.slavelake@assembly.ab.ca, calgary.bow@assembly.ab.ca, calgary.fishcreek@assembly.ab.ca, calgary.cross@assembly.ab.ca, airdrie.chestermere@assembly.ab.ca, reddeer.north@assembly.ab.ca, edmonton.millwoods@assembly.ab.ca, drumheller.stettler@assembly.ab.ca, banff.cochrane@assembly.ab.ca (HINT: If you use your mouse and highlight the whole list - by pressing the left button - then press the right button you can get a menu so you can copy the whole list at once. Open a new email message and paste the whole thing in the To: line. It takes Martha less than a minute to do!)

March 8, 2006

Premier Klein
Alberta Legislature

Dear Premier Klein:

The Marthas of the province are in disbelief. You have introduced the Third Way and it promises to devastate the current system of publicly funded and publicly provided health care. We wish to register our deep concern with this plan and call upon you to withdraw it immediately.

The most troubling part of the Third Way is that doctors will be allowed to provide care in both the public and the private systems. In country after country that has tried this system, those unable to pay for private care have found themselves to be at the end of the line while the rich can jump to the front. We find this to be patently unfair and unacceptable in Alberta.

Women have the most to lose under the Third Way. Women, on average, make less money than men and are more likely to need health care, as they live longer lives than men. Such gender disparity is of particular importance to us today as it is International Women's Day. Women have built this province and deserve much better than third class treatment when they require medical care.

I look forward to your response.

Your name and address