



# Briefing

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EDITOR

In a recent essay Michael Kinsley questions the notion, emphasized by Presidents Reagan and Bush, that private charity can substitute for government in addressing social needs ("Charity Begins with Government," *Time*, April 6, 1992). The stress on private and corporate giving obscures the virtues of using the government to channel monies to those in need, he says. Kinsley points out that the federal government's costs for raising money through taxes and delivering social services are far less than the amounts spent by charities for fund-raising and administration.

And he despairs that, in stressing private charity, elected leaders have poisoned citizens' minds against the government as a mechanism to promote social generosity. "A free society deciding to tax itself to make itself a better society—that's the real united way," according to Kinsley. His words challenge us to recall the opportunities we have in a democracy: We can choose to work together to accomplish what we cannot achieve individually.

What Kinsley alludes to is the conflict in American society between the value of individualism and the value of the common good. The Catholic Health Association's working proposal for healthcare reform (see p. 45), introduced at CHA's annual assembly in June, is based on the belief that public policy must serve the common good and that individuals will benefit when that occurs. The plan recognizes that a rational healthcare system will better meet the needs of all members of society, even if it does require more tax monies.

As Robert N. Bellah pointed out in his keynote address at CHA's assembly (see report, pp. 43-63), the ethical failures in American political and economic life have led to a profound loss of confidence in government and an unwillingness "to pay more to have the government do anything." In this pessimistic climate, CHA's reform proposal stresses a vital, though limited, role for the federal government—providing oversight and determining the funding and benefits of a national health plan. Society must recognize, as Kinsley suggests, that government must assume responsi-

*Assembly  
keynoter Robert  
N. Bellah said  
communities  
must take  
responsibility for  
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bility for problems that individuals cannot solve. The proposal's success, and America's health, depend on it.

## **JOURNAL, AUTHORS HONORED**

*Health Progress* recently received the Catholic Press Association's "general excellence" award. Also honored were Jane H. White for her regular column on public policy, Stephen G. Post for "American Culture and Euthanasia" (December 1991), and Managing Editor Susan K. Hume for "Support in a Time of Need" (September 1991). Artist Eric Dinyer won for his painting that accompanied Stephen Post's article.

We appreciate such awards, but our most important critics are you, our readers. Please continue to contact us about your needs for information.

