

# **Sicko: The US Health Care Industry**

**From The Official Sicko Web Site: <http://www.sicko-themovie.com/>**

*Comment (WRN): Canadians will be sick at the thought of the number of private companies in this list. No matter the rankings!*

## **Rate Your Insurance Provider**

Acordia National (1 Story)

(226 votes, average: 2.7 out of 5)

Blue Cross (69 Stories)

(1,063 votes, average: 2.64 out of 5)

Aetna (31 Stories)

(497 votes, average: 2.38 out of 5)

Aflac (5 Stories)

(162 votes, average: 2.49 out of 5)

American Family Insurance (Tell Your Story)

(88 votes, average: 2.58 out of 5)

American Medical Security Life Insurance Company (Tell Your Story)

(67 votes, average: 2.42 out of 5)

Anthem (8 Stories)

(150 votes, average: 2.31 out of 5)

Assurant (5 Stories)

(77 votes, average: 2.44 out of 5)

Asuris Northwest Health (Tell Your Story)

(50 votes, average: 2.68 out of 5)

Celtic (2 Stories)

(62 votes, average: 2.39 out of 5)

Cigna (11 Stories)

(309 votes, average: 2.29 out of 5)

Continental General (Tell Your Story)

(50 votes, average: 2.66 out of 5)

E-surance (Tell Your Story)  
(73 votes, average: 2.29 out of 5)

Fortis (1 Story)  
(54 votes, average: 2.33 out of 5)

Golden Rule (6 Stories)  
(62 votes, average: 2.44 out of 5)

Group Health Cooperative (1 Story)  
(68 votes, average: 2.65 out of 5)

Health Net (6 Stories)  
(137 votes, average: 2.51 out of 5)

Humana Inc (11 Stories)  
(196 votes, average: 2.09 out of 5)

Intermountain Health Care (1 Story)  
(70 votes, average: 2.69 out of 5)

Kaiser Permanente (35 Stories)  
(345 votes, average: 2.82 out of 5)

LifeWise (Tell Your Story)  
(49 votes, average: 2.8 out of 5)

Medical Mutual (Tell Your Story)  
(63 votes, average: 2.46 out of 5)

Principal Financial Group (2 Stories)  
(55 votes, average: 2.47 out of 5)

Shelter Insurance Companies (Tell Your Story)  
(45 votes, average: 2.47 out of 5)

UniCare (Tell Your Story)  
(92 votes, average: 2.4 out of 5)

UnitedHealthCare (25 Stories)  
(416 votes, average: 2.44 out of 5)

Vista (1 Story)  
(69 votes, average: 2.29 out of 5)

Wellpoint (3 Stories)  
(136 votes, average: 2.54 out of 5)

None (4 Stories)  
(174 votes, average: 2.69 out of 5)

Date: Sat, 30 Jun 2007 20:07:37 -0400 [20:07:37 EDT]  
From: "maillist@michaelmoore.com" <maillist@michaelmoore.com>  
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## **An Awesome First Night for "Sicko"**

**Saturday, June 30th, 2007**

Friends,

Thank you so much to the hundreds of thousands of you who went to see my movie last night and this afternoon. The studio tells me that we are on track to have the second largest opening weekend for a documentary in the history of the movies! ("Fahrenheit 9/11" was first.) Many theaters have been selling out. The Bush administration's investigation of this movie is certainly not keeping people away. Thanks for all the pictures you sent me of people packing in to see "Sicko!"

The movie is making impact big and small. I thought you would enjoy this story about a family that Aetna was forcing to pay a \$65,000 hospital bill that the insurance company was supposed to cover! Check it out ( <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Wz7uRmMUSZM> ).

The critics, too, have been more than kind. Can I show you what a few of them said?

"It's as uplifting and heart-rending a thing as you will see at the movies all year. And it speaks of Moore's enduring faith -- his angry, nettled, exasperated belief that 'despite all our differences, we sink or swim together.' " -- Amy Biancolli, Houston Chronicle

"The weight of evidence Moore marshals for taking the profit motive out of medicine is overwhelming. In a summer of dumb, shameless drivel, Moore delivers a movie of robust mind and heart. You'll laugh till it hurts." -- Peter

Travers, Rolling Stone

"'Sicko' is a beyond brilliant, nonpartisan expose' on American politics that should be mandatory for every student in America. Some rich person -- like maybe Angelina Jolie -- should sponsor a program where DVDs are sent to families or free screenings are held at local churches." -- Caroline Kepnes, E!

For more of this, click here ( <http://www.michaelmoore.com/sicko/pressroom/> ).

There's a moment in "Sicko" when the former British MP, Tony Benn, says, "If we have the money to kill people (with war), we've got the money to help people." That line always gets the loudest applause in the theater. It is estimated that, before Bush's War is over, we will have spent two trillion dollars on it. Let me say this: I NEVER want to hear again from ANY politician that we "don't have the money" to fix our schools, to take care of the poor, to provide health care for every American. Clearly, the money IS there when we want to illegally invade another country and then prolong a disastrous occupation. From now on, we have to demand that our tax dollars be there for the things we need, not the things that make us one of the most detested countries on earth.

If you haven't seen "Sicko," go see it tonight. I want this film to have as much impact as it can. How well it does in terms of attendance this first weekend will determine how many other towns get to see it. It's all about the "first weekend box office" with the studios these days. If it does well in the 400 theaters it's in, they will put it in more theaters next weekend. And trust me, the White House and their friends in the pharmaceutical and health insurance industries know this, too. It's no surprise to me that an original master of "Sicko" was stolen and widely distributed on the internet before the film's release. I'm one of the few people in the movie business who doesn't believe in prosecuting teenagers who want to share music or films (although I make my movies to be seen on a big screen and that's how I hope people see them!). I called up Mr. Bush's FBI last week. I wanted to know if they had asked themselves the first question any cop would ask about this particularly unique theft:

"Who has a vested interest in destroying the first weekend of Michael Moore's new film by stealing his movie's master copy and placing it on the internet?"

Needless to say, they showed little interest in investigating who's behind this. That's ok. I realize what's at stake for them and I accept that this is a battle with serious consequences. The drug and insurance companies have dumped over a half billion dollars in the pockets of Congress and the White House in the last 10 years. This movie may end up being their worst nightmare.

But here's the good news: There's more of us than there are of them. So, it's up to the rest of you to help me help this movie have a great opening weekend. If over a half million people come out to see it by tomorrow night, the studio will take that to mean it should be in more cities and more theaters. Let's make that happen. And I promise you, if you go, you'll see a movie unlike any other you've seen this year. Last night, the industry polled the people coming out of "Sicko." 93% said they would "strongly recommend 'Sicko'" to their friends and family. The pollster said he'd never seen a number that high (the norm for most movies is about 45%). It was a heartening piece of news.

Thanks again and see ya tonight at the movies!

Yours,  
Michael Moore  
[mmflint@aol.com](mailto:mmflint@aol.com)

## Moore's passionate plea for change

[http://www.therecord.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=record/Layout/Article\\_Type1&call\\_pageid=1024322398726&c=Article&cid=1183090870648](http://www.therecord.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=record/Layout/Article_Type1&call_pageid=1024322398726&c=Article&cid=1183090870648)

AMY BIANCOLLI  
June 29, 2007

Judging by its title, *Sicko* might be mistaken for a slasher flick, and the assumption is not far off the mark. Not because of violence. Not because of gore. But because it is, in some ways, a horror film.

Among its victims:

Rick, who sawed off two fingertips but could only afford to reattach one -- for \$12,000. Carole, who couldn't pay her hospital bills and was dumped at a homeless shelter in her flapping white gown. Tracy, who was denied coverage for a bone-marrow transplant and died, weeks later, of kidney cancer.

Michael Moore's latest documentary-as-soapbox-vituperation is a damning, touching, darkly comical expose on the U.S. health-care system. It is also a deeply impassioned appeal for change. Moore haters like to dismiss the man as a whack job and a lying partisan crank, but he's really an idealist.

Look past the omnipresent ball cap and slumping gait, and you'll find a patriot -- a true believer in the American dream. When he says, "We live in a world of 'We,' not 'Me,' " he's not being the least bit campy. He has, for a moment, no sense of irony whatsoever. He believes this stuff.

Moore uses *Sicko* to assail the insurance industry and pharmaceutical companies and the politicians who accept their contributions.

As usual, Moore assembles his argument from poignant anecdotes and factoid-driven diatribes that use graphics, music and archival material to make his point.

With *Sicko*, Moore himself doesn't pop onscreen until some 40 minutes in, a shrewd move for a filmmaker who understands his role as cultural irritant. People who hate him might continue to hate him. They might call *Sicko* an overly theatrical, sucker-punching screed that paints France as paradise, Canadians as smiling (but we knew that), Britain as maddeningly reasonable and Cuba as a cure for what ails us.

But it's a fiercely effective call to arms -- a film that persuades and shames and chills. Moore asks why the United States can remain the only Western nation without universal coverage, how it could rank so high in infant mortality or so low in life expectancy. And he asks why a group of ill 9/11 emergency workers, volunteers not on the New York City payroll, couldn't find affordable health care until he took them to Havana.

You could dismiss it as a stunt, this trip to Cuba. You could point out the country's problems or the movie's cherry-picked health statistics. But nothing so illustrates Moore's rumpled brand of optimism as those few minutes near the end of *Sicko* when Cuban firefighters stand at attention to honour their ailing American brethren.

Sicko meant as U.S. wake-up call

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Moore simply says that Americans don't have universal health care and it's killing them  
THOMAS WALKOM

(Jun 29, 2007)

Among the glitterati, Michael Moore used to be a hero.

Now he is a bum.

When Roger and Me, his film on General Motors head Roger Smith and the deindustrialization of America, came out in 1989, he was lauded by reviewers as a breath of fresh air, a 21st-century gonzo journalist. When it was later revealed that the dramatic core of that film, Smith's refusal to be interviewed by Moore, was untrue, the filmmaker was denounced as dishonest.

Now comes Sicko, Moore's latest film and a scathing indictment of U.S. health care. The critics are determined not to be taken in again. When the flick showed at the Cannes Film Festival, Canadian reviewers blasted Moore for whitewashing this country's medicare system. There was more muttering about his "manipulative" techniques.

The critics should relax. It's true that Sicko may not make it in a peer-reviewed academic journal. Caustic and blatantly opinionated, it makes no pretence at even-handedness. It does not delve into what is good about the American health system, of which there is plenty. Its description of universal health care systems, such as Canada's, is cursory. It is not comprehensive.

It is, rather, a film designed to agitate its audience and make a political point, what in the old days -- before propaganda got a bad



name -- might have been called agitprop.

And it is also fundamentally accurate.

Audiences in Canada, Britain, France and Cuba -- the countries Moore visited on his health odyssey -- might be bemused by portions of *Sicko*. In Moore's Paris, everyone is well-dressed and attractive. In Britain, everyone is polite. In the relatively short Canadian portion, the narrator looks in on a Windsor hospital emergency room and finds no one waiting longer than 45 minutes. To any Canadian who has ever been forced to go to emergency, this would seem unbelievable.

But Moore didn't make the film for Canadians or the Brits or the French. He doesn't delve into Canada's debate over two-tier medicine. He ignores British and French complaints about their respective medicare systems. He doesn't care about any of this. Nor should he.

Moore is making a film for Americans. And what he is telling his compatriots is very simple and very true: that America's refusal to embrace some kind of universal health care system makes absolutely no sense.

This is not a novel point. Nor, outside of the U.S., is it even remotely controversial. In Canada, no one except for a few diehards in the right-of-centre Fraser Institute lionizes the U.S. system.

The reason is simple. Universal public medicare works -- which is why every industrial country outside of the U.S. employs some form of it.

For those who choose to read the scholarly literature, the evidence is overwhelming. Americans spend more per capita on health than any other nation in the world and get worse results. When Moore

says Canadians live on average three years longer than Americans, he is correct. When he says infant mortality rates are lower in this country than the U.S., he is right there too.

It's not just Canada. United Nations figures show that a baby born in Havana has more chance of surviving than one born in New York City.

As Sicko accurately points out, Americans waste billions on so-called administration costs attributable to private health insurance companies -- some of these costs are incurred by insurers doing everything they can to avoid paying benefits to sick policyholders. Moore finds this weird and he is right.

So why don't Americans wise up? Moore looks to vested interests in the U.S., primarily doctors, insurance companies and drug firms. Discount that as paranoia if you wish. But it is all documented in the contemporary press accounts of the bitter debates over Bill Clinton's failed attempt to bring in universal health care.

Moore also fingers the bizarre strain of anti-communism that still runs through U.S. popular culture. And he's not kidding. A good many Americans do think that medicare (or, as they call it socialized medicine) is a plot against freedom. As Moore says, this view is amplified by the media.

Personally, I get a kick out of Moore. At times, he uses all the Hollywood tricks to wind the audience into his story. At other times, he's more Brechtian: During the French segment of Sicko, it's as if he's saying: "I know this is a cartoon, but look at me doing this cartoon!" As a piece of entertainment, it works.

But I suspect Moore is trying to do more than entertain. He's trying to whack his fellow Americans on the head and say to them: Hey! Wake up. Why do we run our health system in such an insane way? No one else does.

And in that, he is absolutely right. Good luck to him.

SICKO

Michael Moore documentary

PG: Opens today at Conestoga

Mall.

## **Moore outraged by film's accusation**

[http://www.therecord.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=record/Layout/Article\\_Type1&call\\_pageid=1024322398726&c=Article&cid=1182143477144](http://www.therecord.com/NASApp/cs/ContentServer?pagename=record/Layout/Article_Type1&call_pageid=1024322398726&c=Article&cid=1182143477144)

BELLAIRE, MICH. (Jun 18, 2007)

Filmmaker Michael Moore gave people in the rural county where he lives an early look at his new film *Sicko* on Saturday, and had some harsh words for critics of the documentary that launched his career.

*Manufacturing Dissent*, a film that accuses Moore of dishonesty in the making of his politically charged documentaries, alleges he interviewed then-General Motors Corp. chair Roger Smith, the elusive subject of Moore's 1989 debut *Roger & Me*, but left the footage on the cutting room floor.

"Anybody who says that is a (expletive) liar," Moore told the Associated Press in an interview Saturday after a showing of *Sicko*, his take on U.S. medicine, in the northern Michigan village of Bellaire.

Moore, who said he hadn't seen *Manufacturing Dissent*, acknowledged having had "a good five minutes of back and forth" with Smith about a company tax abatement at a 1987 shareholders' meeting, as reported by *Premiere* magazine in 1990. But that was before he began working on *Roger & Me* and had nothing to do with the film, Moore said.

A clip of the meeting appears in *Manufacturing Dissent*, released in March. Filmmakers Rick Caine and Debbie Melnyk also interviewed an activist who said he saw Moore interview Smith in 1988 in New York.

Caine and Melnyk say that undercuts the central theme of *Roger &*

Me -- Moore's fruitless effort to interview Smith about the effects of GM plant closings in Flint, Mich., Moore's hometown. Moore, however, said the film wasn't primarily about interviewing Smith, but getting him to observe the economic devastation in Flint.

"If I'd gotten an interview with him, why wouldn't I put it in the film?" Moore said. "Any exchange with Roger Smith would have been valuable." And GM surely would have publicized any interview in response to the movie, he said.

"I'm so used to listening to the stuff people say about me, it just becomes entertainment for me at this point," Moore said. "It's a fictional character that's been created with the name of Michael Moore."

Sicko opens today in New York and two nights later in Washington before hitting screens nationwide June 29, but Moore gave Bellaire, a tourist village 400 kilometres north of Detroit, a sneak peek at a fundraiser for the Democratic Party in rural Antrim County, where he lives. His wife and the film's executive producer, Kathleen Glynn, is the local party's vice-chair.

About 880 people paid \$40 a ticket to watch the sardonic and sometimes heart-rending indictment of American health care. For an additional \$60, they could attend a party with Moore, who autographed film posters, surgical gloves and bandages.

The film chronicles the struggles of ordinary Americans -- some with insurance coverage, others without -- to navigate the health bureaucracy. Portraying insurance companies and supportive politicians in both parties as the villains, Moore contrasts the U.S. system with those of Canada, France and Great Britain, which have government-run programs.

He ends up accompanying a group of rescue workers who became ill after 9/11 to Cuba, where the film describes them as getting

better care and cheaper drugs than at home.

The gloomy tone struck a chord with many who attended. "I feel like Michael Moore's a digger for truth," said Carole Chirgwin of Traverse City.

## **Moore's Sicko premieres on skid row**

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KW Record (Jun 27, 2007)

Hollywood loves to hold movie premieres in unusual places -- on aircraft carriers, at Disneyland, inside Alcatraz. Michael Moore decided to unveil his new health-care documentary, *Sicko*, in a locale few studio executives have ever visited: skid row.

Monday night, Moore screened *Sicko* on the street in front of the Union Rescue Mission in downtown Los Angeles. About 200 clients of the mission and other homeless people attended the screening, which included free popcorn and sodas. The film opens in theatres in Canada on Friday.

"We wanted to invite the whole community," said the Rev. Andy Bales, the mission's chief executive.

Moore noted that one of the film's scenes -- in which a hospital dumps an indigent patient on skid row -- unfolded right where the movie was showing.

# Sicko

[http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/movie.html?v\\_id=352610](http://movies2.nytimes.com/gst/movies/movie.html?v_id=352610)

**2007-US-Special Interest**

[N.Y. Times Review](#) by [A. O. Scott](#)

Critic's Pick

## REVIEW SUMMARY

“Sicko” contends that the American system of private medical insurance is a disaster, and that a state-run system, such as exists nearly everywhere else in the industrialized world, would be better. This argument is illustrated with anecdotes and statistics — terrible stories about Americans denied medical care or forced into bankruptcy to pay for it; grim actuarial data about life expectancy and infant mortality; damning tallies of dollars donated to political campaigns — but it is grounded in a basic philosophical assumption about the proper relationship between a government and its citizens. In “Sicko,” Mr. Moore refrains from hunting down the C.E.O.’s of insurance companies, or from hinting at dark conspiracies against the sick. Concentrating on Americans who have insurance (after a witty, troubling acknowledgment of the millions who don’t), Mr. Moore talks to people who have been ensnared, sometimes fatally, in a for-profit bureaucracy and also to people who have made their livings within the system. — A. O. Scott, The New York Times

» [Read the Full N.Y. Times Review](#)



**Open Wide and Say Shame**

<http://movies2.nytimes.com/2007/06/22/movies/22sick.html>

Published: June 22, 2007

It has become a journalistic cliché and therefore an inevitable part of the prerelease discussion of “Sicko” to refer to Michael Moore as a controversial, polarizing figure. While that description is not necessarily wrong, it strikes me as self-fulfilling (since the controversy usually originates in media reports on how controversial Mr. Moore is) and trivial. Any filmmaker, politically outspoken or not, whose work is worth discussing will be argued about. But in Mr. Moore’s case the arguments are more often about him than about the subjects of his movies.

Some of this is undoubtedly his fault, or at least a byproduct of his style. His regular-guy, happy-warrior personality plays a large part in the movies and in their publicity campaigns, and he has no use for neutrality, balance or objectivity. More than that, his polemical, left-populist manner seems calculated to drive guardians of conventional wisdom bananas. That is because conventional wisdom seems to hold, against much available evidence, that liberalism is an elite ideology, and that the authentic vox populi always comes from the right. Mr. Moore, therefore, must be an oxymoron or a hypocrite of some kind.

So the table has been set for a big brouhaha over “Sicko,” which contends that the American system of private medical insurance is a disaster, and that a state-run system, such as exists nearly everywhere else in the industrialized world, would be better. This argument is illustrated with anecdotes and statistics — terrible stories about Americans denied medical care or forced into bankruptcy to pay for it;

grim actuarial data about life expectancy and infant mortality; damning tallies of dollars donated to political campaigns — but it is grounded in a basic philosophical assumption about the proper relationship between a government and its citizens.

Mr. Moore has hardly been shy about sharing his political beliefs, but he has never before made a film that stated his bedrock ideological principles so clearly and accessibly. His earlier films have been morality tales, populated by victims and villains, with himself as the dogged go-between, nodding in sympathy with the downtrodden and then marching off to beard the bad guys in their dens of power and privilege. This method can pay off in prankish comedy or emotional intensity — like any showman, Mr. Moore wants you to laugh and cry — but it can also feel manipulative and simplistic.

In “Sicko,” however, he refrains from hunting down the C.E.O.’s of insurance companies, or from hinting at dark conspiracies against the sick. Concentrating on Americans who have insurance (after a witty, troubling acknowledgment of the millions who don’t), Mr. Moore talks to people who have been ensnared, sometimes fatally, in a for-profit bureaucracy and also to people who have made their livings within the system. The testimony is poignant and also infuriating, and none of it is likely to be surprising to anyone, Republican or Democrat, who has tried to see an out-of-plan specialist or dispute a payment.

## **Video**

[More Video »](#)

If you listen to what the leaders of both political parties are saying, it seems unlikely that the diagnosis offered by “Sicko” will be contested. I haven’t heard many speeches lately boasting about how well our health care system works. In this sense “Sicko” is the least controversial and most broadly appealing of Mr. Moore’s movies. (It is also, perhaps improbably, the funniest and the most tightly edited.) The argument it inspires will mainly be about the nature of the cure, and it is here that Mr. Moore’s contribution will be most provocative and also, therefore, most useful.

“Sicko” is not a fine-grained analysis of policy alternatives. (You can find some of those in a recently published book called “Sick,” by Jonathan Cohn, and also in the wonkier precincts of the political blogosphere.) This film presents, instead, a simple compare-and-contrast exercise. Here is our way, and here is another way, variously applied in Canada, France, Britain and yes, Cuba. The salient difference is that, in those countries, where much of the second half of “Sicko” takes place, the state provides free medical care.

## For Filmmaker, ‘Sicko’ Is a Jumping-Off Point for Health Care Change

The cameramen shuffled backward through a Capitol Hill corridor, as reporters from Tokyo and Paris strained to capture the campaigner’s every word. An entourage of handlers, with cellphones to their ears, kept the scrum moving toward the door. A van was waiting, its engine running. “Keep moving, people,” one aide barked. “Keep moving. We’ve got to go.”

Try [Michael Moore](#), the guerrilla filmmaker, his plaid shirt untucked in the back, on the latest stop, held Wednesday, in a Barnumesque promotional tour that has taken on the trappings and purpose of a tightly managed political campaign.

As he moved from Sacramento to New York and on to Washington this week, Mr. Moore has not just set out to sell tickets to “Sicko,” his cinematic indictment of the American health care system. He has also pushed his prescription for reform: a single-payer system, with the government as insurer, that would guarantee access to health care for all Americans and put the private insurance industry out of business.

Whether embracing Mr. Moore’s remedy or disdaining it, elected officials and policy experts agreed last week that the film was likely to have broad political impact, perhaps along the lines of “An Inconvenient Truth,” [Al Gore](#)’s jeremiad on [global warming](#). It will,

they predicted, crystallize the frustration that is a pre-existing condition for so many health care consumers.

Well before the film's June 29 national release (it opened Friday on one New York screen), politicians on the left began lining up to associate themselves with Mr. Moore.

Representative John Conyers Jr., a Democrat from Mr. Moore's home state of Michigan, played host to the filmmaker at a Congressional hearing this week to build support for his bill to establish a single-payer system. Fabian Núñez, the speaker of the California Assembly, who is negotiating a health care package with Gov. [Arnold Schwarzenegger](#), held a closed-door meeting with Mr. Moore last week and then joined him at a crowded news conference. After attending a screening on Wednesday night, Representative Bobby L. Rush, a Democrat from Chicago, promptly swore off contributions from the pharmaceutical industry.

"I think one movie can make a difference; I do believe that," Mr. Moore said Wednesday, while being driven from the standing-room-only Congressional hearing to a puckishly arranged screening for health care lobbyists. "I'm not doing this to market the film. First of all, I don't need to market my films. Every time I make a film, it breaks the last record. But I'm doing this because I really want to make a contribution to the national debate on this issue."

Though few people have actually seen the movie, [Harvey Weinstein](#), one of its executive producers, said it had already set off "a political wildfire." The film, Mr. Weinstein said, "comes at a time when people are fed up with health care and want reforms — and I believe it will be

a catalyst for the type of real change people want.”

Mr. Núñez, a Los Angeles Democrat, said the movie would galvanize support for the reform legislation in the California Legislature. “The conclusion you come to after watching that documentary is that you have a health care system on the verge of collapse,” he said. “It’s either going to fall of its own weight, or people are going to rise up against it.”

The movie’s critics argue that it lacks the credibility to move public opinion in a lasting way, and that it will have no more impact than Mr. Moore’s previous films.

“I think it will be like ‘Bowling for Columbine,’ ” said Michael F. Cannon, director of health policy studies for the Cato Institute. “You remember how we all got together afterwards and decided to ban guns.”

Mr. Moore and his producers have hired a team of experienced political operatives to garner publicity for “Sicko” and to respond to anticipated attacks from the insurance and pharmaceutical industries. They include Chris Lehane, an aggressive consultant for the Gore and Kerry presidential campaigns, and Ken Sunshine, a prominent New York publicist who once served as chief of staff for [David N. Dinkins](#), the former mayor.

At stops on each coast, in scenes that seem made for a sequel, the Moore camp has surrounded its standard bearer with chanting health care workers uniformed in red scrubs. The strategists used full-page advertisements to invite 900 lobbyists — by name — to the private screening in Washington (only half a dozen showed) and held another

screening on Wall Street for health care stock analysts. They orchestrated a march on the headquarters of the Blue Cross and Blue Shield Association in Chicago, and sent Mr. Moore into New Hampshire, the first primary state, to demand pledges of support from presidential candidates.

“It’s being run like a war,” Mr. Moore said. “I mean, we’re in a battle with these corporations who want to maintain their position. They don’t want to give an inch on this, and we’re out to upset the apple cart.”

Mr. Moore agrees that he is merely setting a match to fuel that has been welling for years. Recent polls show that universal access to health coverage is by far the country’s top domestic policy priority, and that nearly half of all Americans say they support the single-payer system extolled by Mr. Moore in “Sicko.”

But the success of Mr. Moore’s previous films guarantees “Sicko” the kind of mass audience rarely associated with health care reform. His last movie, “Fahrenheit 9/11,” became the top grossing documentary ever, taking in \$119.2 million domestically in 2004 (five times as much as Mr. Gore’s movie in 2006). “Sicko” has a \$9 million budget, Mr. Weinstein said.

Though speaking against the film carries the risk of generating more buzz for it, the opposition is also campaigning hard. Representatives of insurance and pharmaceutical trade groups are countering Mr. Moore’s praise for socialized health systems in Canada, Cuba, France and Britain. And as details have seeped out from screenings, they have started disputing some of Mr. Moore’s anecdotes about rejected insurance claims and unnecessary deaths.

Staff members of America's Health Insurance Plans, the industry's leading trade group, handed out news releases at Mr. Moore's events this week emphasizing the need for "a uniquely American solution" and raising the specter of "long waits for rationed care."

Free-market policy groups like the Cato Institute have held briefings to rebut Mr. Moore, showing short films that find fault with the Canadian system. Health Care America, a group that is financed in part by pharmaceutical and hospital companies, placed an advertisement in a Capitol Hill newspaper stating: "In America, you wait in line to see a movie. In government-run health care systems, you wait to see a doctor."

Ken Johnson, a senior vice president for Pharmaceutical Manufacturers of America, predicted the movie was "going to energize activists, but I don't think it's going to change anybody's party affiliation." Yet, Mr. Johnson said the industry did not feel it could ignore the movie because doing so would "admit tacitly that some of what he says is true, and that's not the case. He holds the camera, he gets the last say, and that's the problem for us."