

A PINEWOOD DIALOGUE WITH MICHAEL MOORE

Michael Moore is the most famous, controversial, and commercially successful documentary filmmaker working today. The notoriety surrounding his films has obscured the fact that he is a gifted director who uses a wide range of cinematic techniques to engage, entertain, and provoke his audience. *Sicko*, his widely acclaimed, no-holds barred attack on the American healthcare system, uses the issue of healthcare to explore larger questions about what kind of country America is. In this discussion presented by the Museum of the Moving Image in collaboration with *Variety*, Moore spoke passionately about the many questions raised by his film.

A Pinewood Dialogue following a screening of *Sicko*, moderated by Chief Curator David Schwartz (June 28, 2007):

DAVID SCHWARTZ: Congratulations on the film. The film was rushed into the theaters last week and I understand that you went to some of the screenings at the Lincoln Square [theater]. The film has gotten really an amazing response.

MICHAEL MOORE: Well... (Applause)

SCHWARTZ: A woman outside, when you came in, came up and said, "I'm glad you were born." You said you'd never heard that one before.

MOORE: No. (Laughs) No, in fact I've spent most of the last three years listening to people say, "I wish you were dead." (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: But there's a different reception to this film than the sort of polarizing effect that previous films have had. I mean, this film seems to really be bringing people together.

MOORE: Yeah, I—no, that's true. I mean, they've actually tested it with Republican audiences (Laughter) and it's tested very well. And the Fox News channel reviewer called it "Brilliant and uplifting." So... (Laughter) I thought, "What are they trying to do, ruin me?" (Laughter) But I made this in a spirit of—while I still believe, obviously very strongly, in the things I believe in—that this shouldn't be a partisan issue. I'm hoping to hold my hand out across the great divide that we have in

this country and say to those on the other side of the political fence, "Look, aren't there some issues where we can find some common ground and work together on this? And it shouldn't be about Democrat or Republican. If the polar ice caps are melting, that affects all of us. If 47 million people don't have health insurance, that affects all of us. Can't we agree to fix this?" So I do hope that that will happen. Having said that, that may make my most subversive film, because I am attempting to reach deep into mainstream America with this movie.

SCHWARTZ: There's so much discussion and press around any opening of a Michael Moore film. It's just been amazing trying to keep up with all the stories coming out. And I think sometimes you're not appreciated enough, or people don't talk enough about just the filmmaking craft and process that you go through.

MOORE: Thanks. I appreciate that, because I rarely get a chance to talk about that because people usually want to engage in—which is okay—in the political discussion, but...

SCHWARTZ: Well, we'll get into that! (Laughter) But I know that you—for one thing, that this film probably had the highest shooting ratio: about 250:1, from what I understand. And really, what I want to ask is how you put this together? I heard that you were making a film about healthcare, and I couldn't picture how that would work as a film, or what you would do.

MOORE: Neither could I, I would say. (Laughter) But I like to pick subjects that I think either sound boring, or difficult to understand or—I always imagine someone saying to their spouse or boyfriend or girlfriend, “Hey honey, let’s go to that health care documentary tonight!” (Laughter) because I wouldn’t want to go to that. So I start with that: that I wouldn’t want to see a film like this. And so, while shooting it, I’m always in a theater seat, in an imaginary theater seat, thinking about, “What would I like to see on a Friday night?” And as a filmmaker, first and foremost, I set out to try and make a film where, at the end of the two hours, people will leave with a feeling of exhilaration. And I think all filmmakers hope to do that, ultimately.

People work hard all week, and Friday night comes; they want to go to the movies. And so I want to give them that two hours of something where they’ll laugh and—you know the cliché, “They’ll laugh they’ll cry... and, in this case, leave the theater wanting to slap an insurance company executive...” (Laughter) No, don’t! No violence.

I mean, I love this art form, and I worry that it’s been so debased by the bottom line, by Hollywood, which is owned by other companies that are concerned about profit and not about the art. That’s why we have so many movies that—I mean, I like going to the movies, so I go to a lot of movies, and I just leave constantly with a sense of... (Sighs) Am I right? I mean, that’s not an unfamiliar feeling. We don’t want that feeling! We want to skip up the aisle. And so I’m thinking a lot about that.

SCHWARTZ: Let’s talk, then, about just how you start the film, the first two shots. We start off with George Bush. It’s an easy laugh-line, of course. It’s a great laugh-line.

MOORE: Well, it’s a tease to you, too. (Laughs) Because, you know, I just imagine people going, “Oh, here we go again. (Laughter) Two hours of Bush bashing. O-h-h-h.” And then you don’t see him for another hour, so it’s really—I’m just having some fun with the audience.

SCHWARTZ: Then you go to this incredible shot of this guy stitching up his wound—right with those first two shots, just saying, “This is going to be something different. Something that might be

painful at times to watch.” But it is a Michael Moore film; you always make your films entertaining.

MOORE: Well, and I also say in the first two minutes that I’m not going to do what you may think I’m going to do, which is give you a two-hour film about the poor (as any good Liberal would want to make a film about that). I’m at a point in my life where if I have to spend two hours trying to convince people that 47 million [Americans] who don’t have insurance should at least have insurance—or at least the 9 million of them who are children should be covered—if I have to take, really, two hours and a year-and-a-half of my life to make that film, then we’re much more messed up than a two-hour film is ever going to correct. So I start with the assumption that most people think that that’s wrong and somehow should be fixed. I thought it was much more interesting to focus on people who are covered, who have insurance, and who think everything is hunky-dory until they meet with a serious illness.

SCHWARTZ: So how did the shape of it come into focus? Because you did a call for stories, you collected all these stories, but you have a very clear... it’s an essay film, in a way. It’s entertaining, but you’re making a very clearly thought-out argument.

MOORE: Well, it was because of those letters. I mean, I thought we would hear mostly from people who don’t have insurance—and we did. But the stories that we heard from people who were covered, and who found out that even if they had money, [they] could end up destitute—people in the upper middle class who lost everything because of hospital bills that were half-a-million, a million, two-million dollars, and [who] found that their insurance company no way wanted to pay two-million dollars, and [that they were] going to find any way they could to get out of paying that bill. And I thought, “Geez, you know, I wonder how many people really realize that?” Because I think most of us—if you’re healthy, and you haven’t really had a serious illness—you don’t really think about it a whole lot. In fact, we actually like to brag about, “Hey, yeah, I got *benefits*. Oh, yeah, I got. I’m fully covered! Fully insured!” After this film, I want people to maybe pick up their health insurance policy and read the fine print, because there’s a lot

of things in there that I think would shock a lot of people.

SCHWARTZ: Now, the idea to look at other countries—and you’ve done this before a bit with voyages to Canada in *Bowling for Columbine*—but the idea of using that, and winding up in Cuba as you did, can you talk about how that came into the story? Because that’s not from the stories you collected originally.

MOORE: No, I just have always wondered why, if out of the top twenty-five industrialized countries, twenty-four of them are doing it one way, and one is doing it the other way... the twenty-four must be wrong. (Laughs) And all we’ve heard about is how horrible those systems are. The long wait-lines in Canada, the British system... We’ve all heard these stories. We’ve been inundated with them to keep us away from thinking about universal health coverage. And I thought, “Geez, have you ever seen a story on the evening news about, ‘Hey! Look what’s great about the Canadian health system!’” You haven’t seen that story, right? And you’re not going to see that story.

First of all, the evening news is funded by the pharmaceutical companies. I mean, every other ad is a drug ad, right? So I just thought, “For two hours, maybe I could present a different picture of what the Canadian system is like; what the British system is like...” and as I was there, I found these things that I was stunned to discover: that a lot of doctors are actually quite happy, [and] do quite well; and the people seem quite pleased with their system. It doesn’t mean there aren’t problems in their system. But it’s kind of like, “Why don’t we approach it from this way? Instead of looking at all the things that are wrong with the Canadian system, why don’t we pick the two things they do right, and pick the two things the Brits do right, and two things the—well, the twenty things the French do right, and put it all...” (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: Now, you’re not just saying that because we’re at the French Institute tonight, right?

MOORE: No; they’re just happy that *one* American is going to say something nice about them, so... (Laughter) But why don’t we put that all together and create an American system? Because we can see what works in each of these countries, and let’s

figure out how we can make that work in our unique situation.

SCHWARTZ: I want to ask you about a few of the choices you made, where you probably knew you were opening yourself up to questions or criticism. And I’ll start with the easier one: The person who had the anti-Michael Moore website, and you decided to help him out. And the decision to put that in the film, where it’s sort of clear that it’s making you look good. Could you talk about your thinking about that? About the choice of doing that, first, and then keeping it in the film?

MOORE: First of all, I didn’t know it would end up being in the film. When I did it, it was a year ago. And we did a lot of great things that aren’t in this film. And I knew at the time... basically, I had to ask myself this question: Would you be writing this check if it wasn’t going to be in the film? And if it doesn’t end up in the film, are you going to feel okay about writing this guy a check after he said all these things about you? And I thought about it and I said, “Yes. No, I’m going to do this regardless of whether it’s in the film or not, because it’s the right thing to do. This is the way I was brought up.” And it’s a part of my own personal beliefs, my spiritual beliefs, that we are supposed to love our enemies, and do good to those who persecute you, and turn the other cheek; and that there’s a lot of strength and power in that form of nonviolence and love toward those who are hating.

So I did that. And it wasn’t easy to do it. And then I had it in the film and I took it out. I had it in because I thought, “Oh, geez, people are just going to think I’m...” But then I thought, “No. You know, actually I want them to think... I want to be an example of this. I want to say that this is the kind of society I want to live in. I want the hatred toned down, and the sort of screaming, yelling, mean...”

You know, I’ve never uttered the words, “I hate George W. Bush.” I’ve never uttered those words. I would not say those words. I do not hate him. I would not say I hate another human being like that. It debases me; it debases all of us when we operate in that gutter; and the other side has been in that gutter for way too long, and they’ve dragged a lot of us, I think, down into it. And I don’t think we have to be on that level.

And so, I felt that I could maybe put it in there and maybe some people would say, "Geez, well, what could I do to extend my hand to those who hate?" Now, I know that seems, probably to a lot of people, like, "Well, fuck them." (Laughs) You know, like, "I'm not going to give them—not only not \$12,000, I'm not going to ever give them the time of day!"

But a lot of them—I mean, there are people from the part of the country where I'm from, and I realize that they're scared. They've been manipulated with fear. They've been kept ignorant. First, by an education system that sucks; and secondly, by a media that refuses to do its job, to ask the hard questions and demand the answers. So they don't know.

You know, the night I was booed off the Oscar stage—and boy, I'll tell you, that next few weeks and months—it was rough. I mean, there were five or six assaults or attempted assaults on me. Just crazy stuff. People walking down the street, they'd see me, they'd take the lid off their Starbucks and throw hot coffee at me!

SCHWARTZ: That's expensive coffee, too, so...

MOORE: I know! (Laughter) And I'm thinking, "And I don't even drink coffee!" I mean, if it had been a Frappuccino, at least there would have been, you know, some sugar in it or something, but... (Laughter) But I knew during that entire time, during '03 and '04, when I was sticking my neck out there and saying the things I was saying, that people would eventually come around. That Americans do have good hearts, they have a conscience, they know right from wrong. They're just kept stupid; we're slow learners. But sooner or later, we come around. And when we do come around, watch out! And look what's happened: Mr. Bush now has a 70% disapproval rating; 70% are against the war; and it's the flip of what it was three years ago. (Applause)

SCHWARTZ: So I wanted to ask you about another scene, which is sort of related to this. It's a scene that I'm asking about because I found it very moving. I teared up when I saw it: The scene in the firehouse in Cuba, where I'm watching it... the idea that we're all brothers, and there's this closeness that was expressed in that scene. And as I'm being

emotional about the scene, I also know that people are going to attack that and say, "This is painting a pretty picture of Cuba," and that [it] will be used as a way to attack the film.

MOORE: You know, it's funny; if I had gone to China and done a scene in the movie on Chinese medicine, there wouldn't be a single word raised against me. I wouldn't be criticized at all, would I? I wouldn't have the Bush administration considering filing charges against me; nobody would think that was bad at all. "Oh, there's a Chinese medicine scene in the movie." And yet, every human rights group says that China is a far more repressive regime than Cuba. But not a word would be said. So it's not really about Castro being repressive, is it? Or Communist, is it? What is it really about? I mean, really, that's what I think.

The pretty picture that gets painted—that's all our news is—is an illusion. I mean, we live in a city—or we're in a city right now; I don't live here any longer—[with] eight million people, and a million live in poverty. One million people live in serious poverty in this city. And yet, I'll turn on the eleven o'clock news tonight, and I won't see that picture, because they're painting the pretty picture. Or they'll show the effects of poverty, but they're meant to scare the people who live in the suburbs. You know, "*Tonight in the Bronx. A drive-by shooting kills three!*" That's what's going on. Every day: "*Today's Health Report on CNN brought to you by...*" fill in the blank pharmaceutical company. Twelve page supplement in *Time* magazine. How often do you see that? Or in any of the news weeklies? A health supplement, right? "*Sponsored by...*" a health insurance company or a pharmaceutical company. Their side, that rosy picture, that propaganda... we are *inundated* with it, day in and day out. And I come along every two or three years, for two hours, and say, "Here's the other side. Or *a* side. Or *my* thoughts." And I am pummeled for it when I raise my head above the ground to say a few of these words.

And let me say this about Cuba: 62% of the American people now oppose the Cuban embargo. That's a big majority. And I think the American people are a lot smarter than the politicians, frankly. They don't want to be told any longer who our enemy is. And after this debacle in Iraq, I don't ever want to be told again about this boogeyman, or that

boogeyman, or that... or whatever. I just will not listen to it anymore. I think most Americans won't listen to it anymore. I think there's a general frustration in this country right now. And most people, I think, realize we live in a fairly dark time. And it just seems to get weirder and worse—with Cheney this week declaring that he's really not part of the government... (Laughter) You know, it's just... (Laughs) Okay, we laugh because it's too frightening to do anything else! (Laughter) So we turn on Jon Stewart and just try to get through the next day! (Applause)

SCHWARTZ: I did want to just acknowledge that we had a City Council member here tonight, Eric Gioia, who spent a week living on food stamps, and showing what it was like for so many people in the city.

MOORE: And gained weight. No, he did. Where are you here?

SCHWARTZ: Right. He actually had to leave to do an interview, but...

MOORE: Oh. Well, he's probably exercising.

SCHWARTZ: Right. (Laughs)

MOORE: No, but seriously. I don't know if you read the story, but he tried to live on food stamps. For a single man, you get \$28 dollars a week—is that right?—for food in New York City. (Laughter) Which meant he had to buy a lot of junk and simple carbohydrates. In that week, he gained three or four pounds—I forgot what it was—in just a week's time, from eating the crap that people eat. I mean, I didn't get into it in the film, other than to put a card at the end to say, "Eat your fruits and vegetables and go for a walk." But I thought a lot about it while I was making this film; and in the last few months, I've really been thinking about... I felt, actually, I was kind of hypocritical making a movie about healthcare, and I wasn't taking care of my own health. And so I just started going for a walk and tried to get up to an hour a day, just to get out and move around, and eat these fruit and vegetable things that... (Laughter) that I can see many of you do eat. And it's been great. I mean, it really, actually—I mean, I'm from the Midwest. So guys like me, you know, we're never going to go on a

diet. You'll never see us in a spinning class. But... (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: You're a skinny guy from the Midwest, right?

MOORE: For the Midwest, I am pretty skinny. (Laughter) I mean, if you've ever been there... You know what I mean? No, seriously, I am! But I've lost about thirty pounds in the last three months, just by doing a few things and... (Applause) Please, I would hold the applause until the next seventy pounds come off! (Laughter) But thank you for that; I do need all the encouragement that I can get... but, you know, there's not going to be a Jane Fonda workout tape or anything that I'm going to put out. (Laughter) But I do want to put that on my website for people like me who ... You can fight the man, and stay out of the broken health care system, in some ways, if you just take care of yourself. Obviously it won't cure everything, you know. Accidents can happen, and cancer can happen, and whatever... But if we all did just a little bit to take better care of ourselves, that would go a long way toward prolonging and living our lives... at least as long as the Canadians do! (Laughs) Bastards. (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: At the Museum, we collect marketing material and merchandising material; and this is a *Sicko* Band-Aid... But there's a group of nurses that's going around in scrubs, in *Sicko* scrubs; so could you talk about that? And then can you promise to donate one of those to the Museum?

MOORE: Oh, yes, that's easy. Actually, these are not marketing materials that came from Bob and Harvey [Weinstein] or the movie. These nurses did this on their own. They've been organizing around this movie for the last couple of weeks. They're going to be at theaters all across America tomorrow [the general release date for *Sicko*]. There are 3.2 million nurses in the country, and all the nurses' unions in the country have banded together behind this film. They printed up their own nurses' scrubs for *Sicko* and all this. I mean, their website had more stuff on it than my website had! They're spending about \$2 million of their own money to market this film! In their own sphere—I mean, we have no control over it or anything. Their goal is to get one million nurses to see this film because they believe... there are nurses in every community,

every city, town and village in America, and the nurses are on the front lines of this, and the nurses can maybe lead this revolution to have universal health care in this country.

SCHWARTZ: Is the specific goal to get John Conyers' bill passed? Is that what this is leading towards?

MOORE: Yes, that's one thing that people can do, is to pass HR-676. That's the universal healthcare bill in Congress. Over seventy representatives are co-sponsors and I encourage people to get behind that. Second thing is, demand that the candidates running for office this coming year take a strong and *specific* position. Because our Democratic friends will all say they're for healthcare for all Americans. That's not good enough. Specifically, we want to know, "How are you going to do it?" And I want to hear them say, "We need to remove private insurance as the middle man between the doctor and the patient." Never again... (Applause)

Never again should a doctor, when he or she has a patient in the room, have to call a man in a cubicle a thousand miles away and ask permission to perform a procedure! That is the most idiotic thing—if a Martian came and saw that... (Laughter) it would make zero sense! And I'm telling you, a couple hundred years from now, history will not be kind to us in the way that we did this. The way we laugh at them for putting leeches on themselves 150 years ago, thinking that was going to cure their illness? They're going to be laughing at us for doctors calling some guy in a cubicle in Denver to say whether or not he can perform a procedure!

So John Edwards (who I like) for instance, he has a very specific plan. He wants our tax dollars to go into the pockets of the private insurance companies to administrate this. Believe me, their job is to make profit. And they have to: that's their fiduciary responsibility to maximize profits for their share holders. Right there, once you say *that*, that's the end of the discussion, because they can only maximize profits for their shareholders by denying care! If they pay out all these claims, they don't make as much money! It's like Vegas insurance: the house has to win, the house has to win! In healthcare, the house should *never* win; the patient should win!

So private insurance companies have to go. They can't be part of the equation. [Dennis] Kucinich, I think, is the only one who's saying that. And even he is saying, I think, he would still allow the non-profits like Blue Cross and Kaiser [Permanente]. Well, you can see from the film, they're not any better. So, I don't want any private insurers, whether they're profit or non-profit, involved as the middle man here. And frankly... I mean, [there are] two things that can happen, I guess, right now. Mrs. Clinton has not put forth her plan. So there's still time for people who see this film to put pressure on her to do the right thing, and put forth the right plan that should be out there. So I'm hoping that that happens. If things continue to go the way they go, she stands perhaps to be the next President of the United States... crickets in the room. (Laughter)

I have always loved her, as I hope you could see in the first part of my [film]... (Laughter) I wrote a chapter in my first book called, "My Forbidden Love for Hillary." And it is a forbidden love... But you know, those of us who have loved her, our hearts have been broken by the votes on the war; and now that Rick Santorum is gone, I guess she would now be the number one recipient in the Senate of health care industry money. But there's still time to affect her plan. And there's someone who hasn't entered the race, who's actually very good on this issue. He was right about the war before the war started; he's been right about global warming forever; and you don't even need to say his name... (Applause)

SCHWARTZ: And he was elected once, already.

MOORE: And he was already elected! So he comes, like, pre-packaged! (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: When you were recording your narration—you get so worked up about the subject, and in the narration...

MOORE: Yeah, sorry about that.

SCHWARTZ: No, no, no... but the narration is subdued. So was that hard for you to do?

MOORE: Drugs. (Laughter) No actually, those of us who made the film—our producer Meghan O'Hara's here and our other producer Ray Young...

SCHWARTZ: Yeah, Meghan O'Hara I want to acknowledge, in the back...

MOORE: Right in the back there. (Applause) And I have three great editors. One of them edited *Fahrenheit* [9/11]; the other edited a film called *Murderball*; and the third one edited *An Inconvenient Truth*. So I had, obviously, the extreme edit team. But it was depressing as hell, every day, to sit in the edit room and watch this movie. And that narration, actually, was recorded on a little microphone at the Avid. I'd say about 70% of the narration in the film was just me riffing off the top of my head, while we were watching it and working on it in the edit room. I tried that in *Fahrenheit*, too, and I thought that what I was saying was more effective because it was real and from the heart, as opposed to scripted, and re-scripted, and reworked... and now at the thirteenth draft, I'm going to read the narration. And so that's why sometimes the quality isn't that good. You'll hear a difference sometimes, or you'll hear all the taxis in New York honking in the background. (Laughs) But that's how I do the narration now: more of a stream of consciousness, in the end. And because we were so full of despair watching this, that tone came a lot out of that sense of despair.

SCHWARTZ: But I read—you talk about the despair—I read you had a sign up in the editing room saying, "This is a comedy." Is that true?

MOORE: Right; it said, "Beavis and Butthead want to go to this movie." (Laughter) And every now and then, I would have to just say to the staff, "I've rented a screening room, and we're going to go watch *Talladega Nights*," you know, just to lift people's spirits—which, by the way, was one of the most subversive comedies of recent years, if you haven't seen it.

SCHWARTZ: Let's take some questions, and I'll repeat people's questions so we can hear them. (Repeats audience question) You focused more on the insurance companies than on the pharmaceuticals; could you talk about your decision to do that?

MOORE: The pharmaceutical companies deserve their own film... (Applause) I'm not saying I'm going to make that movie, but I don't believe a movie should be longer than two hours, and I'm an

advocate for movies being shorter than what they've been in recent times. (Laughter) Somebody was applauding from the boiler room!

But the other reason was that we need medicine. We actually do need the pharmaceutical companies. We don't need the insurance companies. But we do need the pharmaceutical companies. So what I propose is that they should be more strictly regulated, like a public utility. Because we do need medicine to survive; just as you need heat and electricity to survive in your home, you need medicine, at times; and therefore, they should be regulated like a public utility. Those of you who are old enough to remember Jonas Salk—you know, doctors, scientists, pharmaceutical companies, they used to work on—thirty years ago, there were twenty-five pharmaceutical companies that worked on cures and vaccines. Today there are five. Because there's no money in it. Once you cure somebody, you can't give them pills for the next thirty years. Or *sell* them pills, I should say.

Jonas Salk, when he invented the Polio vaccine, they asked him, "Aren't you going to patent this?" He said, "No. That would be immoral. This belongs to the people." The man who invented the kidney dialysis machine, he wouldn't patent it. He said, "This belongs to the people." That's the way it used to be, if you're old enough to remember that. I was born in a hospital that was run by nuns. They weren't doing that for profit, they were doing that because they felt that was their service to the community, and that was their mission. We're a long way from where we were. But your parents and your grandparents remember what it used to be like. And I'm telling you, in their day, *nobody* went bankrupt from a medical bill. And now it's the number one cause of bankruptcy in the United States: medical bills. So we have got to get back on track here, because I think we've strayed way, way far from who we are at our core.

SCHWARTZ: (Repeats audience question) A question about universal healthcare, and would that raise the taxes too much and add to the problem, [like the current American education system]?

MOORE: But [schools] don't suck because they're socialized, they suck because we've turned our heads away from [them], and we don't fund them

properly, and we don't give the schools what they need. Teachers are in there doing an incredible job, struggling with what little they have. (Applause) If you are paying off a college loan—I don't know if you are or not...? You're out. Okay, well that's good. But if you pay \$200 a month on your college loan; and if you pay \$200 a week or more in childcare; if you are buying your own insurance if you have a family, \$1000 premium is not unusual, per month, for health insurance. Right there, we're talking about \$16- \$17,000 a year that you're paying that the French don't pay. So they pay more in taxes—but we don't call it tax here, but we have to pay for these things. And, you know, they don't complain about their taxes as much as we do, yet they pay more in taxes. That's because, I think, they see a tangible result for the money they pay in. Kids go to school for free; college for free; daycare is cheap; medical bills: free. And we don't see anything for our taxes—we can't even get the potholes fixed! So people—we hate paying taxes. I think that would change if we actually started to talk about taxes in a different way.

SCHWARTZ: (Repeats audience question) Okay, would you make a film about real estate development and what real estate developers are doing? (Applause) We're getting a lot of film pitches for you, ideas for your next film.

MOORE: Uh... okay! (Laughter)

SCHWARTZ: This film percolated for a long time. I mean, you dealt with healthcare in your TV series, *TV Nation* and *The Awful Truth*. So it's been an issue that you've been thinking about for a long time.

MOORE: Yes; *TV Nation* was a show I had on NBC in 1994. We did the Healthcare Olympics, where I placed a camera in a waiting room in a hospital in Fort Lauderdale. One in a hospital: a camera crew in Toronto; and then one in Havana. And I had Bob Costas and Ahmad Rashad do the play-by-play of who got seen first, who got the best care, and who paid the least.

So anyways, Cuba won. And then the censor at NBC called me up and said, "Cuba can't win. (Laughter) We can't say that at NBC, that Cuba won." I said, "That's crazy. They won." "Nope, Cuba can't win. Canada has to win," is what she said. "You have to say that Canada won." I said,

"Well, Canada didn't win. They charged the guy fifteen dollars for crutches." (Laughter) That was his whole bill. And so when it aired, it ran that Canada won. But, I have to tell you, they didn't win... but I have been thinking about this for a long time.

SCHWARTZ: (Repeats audience question) What could students do, what could young people do [to support universal healthcare], so we don't have to...?

MOORE: It's funny, the front page of *The New York Times* yesterday was talking about how young people, students, are actually very concerned about this issue, and support universal healthcare by a higher percentage than their parents do. So clearly, a lot of young people have already seen their parents suffer through this: paying these bills, getting jacked around by insurance companies, or not having insurance at all.

As young people, you can help organize around this one bill in Congress. You can demand that, when candidates... Go to the forums, go to the town halls they have, and ask them specifically what their position is, and why they don't support the removal of profit and private companies from running our healthcare? You know, you're never going to have the money that the health insurance industry has in backing these candidates. But there are things you can do to get involved. You can write letters, you can organize students around this....

But, you know, any answer I give you is just going to sound like eighth grade civics class, because it's all the basic things. But they're the tools that we don't use. And it is the big question other people have in other countries about us: Why are we so lame and silent? They don't understand: if 70% of the country is against the war, and we're in the fifth year of this war, how could it be? How could it be? And why aren't we in the streets? Why is there nothing being done about this? And it is an amazing thing about us. And I think a lot of it is what Tony Benn said: People are working two jobs—or like the woman in the film, three jobs. You know, they're struggling to get by! They're living from paycheck to paycheck. They don't have time to get politically involved. And one way to keep people from being politically involved is to run them through the ringer, have them in so much debt, have them afraid, and it's—your mind is so you

can't think! You can't organize and act. That's why a lot of times in the past, change has occurred when young people do it, because you don't have a lot of the yoke around your neck that your parents and your grandparents have. So you've got the time to raise some hell and to raise a ruckus and to do something. So I encourage you to do that. (Applause)

SCHWARTZ: Do you feel a sea change now, in the political mood? You've always been a populist in your films. You've always spoken up for the working class and been a populist. In the last election cycle, that word "populist" was supposed to be a bad word; you were a "populist," you were a "Liberal," and those were all bad words. How do you see things going now? Do you feel a difference?

MOORE: Well, certainly on a partisan level, I think there's a big difference. I think [Zbigniew] Brzezinski put it best, on Bill Maher two months ago; I don't know if you saw him? You know, Brzezinski's a fairly conservative Democrat, and Bill Maher asked him, "What do you think is going to happen in the election next year?" And Brzezinski looks into the camera, with that great accent of his, and he goes, "*The Republicans will be wiped out.*" (Laughter) And that is what's going to happen. I mean, there is going to be a real... (Applause)

I mean, I have Republican friends. I'm sure everyone here has one or two, come on... (Laughter) And some of them are pretty smart people. And they are embarrassed. And they know that doom is ahead. I feel bad for them but, you know, they're not going to be... the Democrats are going to have a chance to do something. Of course, that's a scary thing too, because they seem not to have a spine, most of the time, to stand up and do the things that need to get done. So that's our job: to give them the spine, once they're in office. But if anybody would like to run for office next year, really, I think than anybody with a "D" in front of their name is going to get elected. So, this is your one chance, probably, to really run.

The Republicans are smarter than us. They're meaner than us. They're more well-heeled than we are. And they've got their shit together. And they are up at the crack of dawn fighting their fight. I mean, most of us never see dawn unless we've

been up all night! (Laughter) So they have a three-hour head start on us every day.

SCHWARTZ: (Repeats audience question) The divestiture campaign; the question [is about] your encouraging people to get out of investing in stock in health insurance companies? And do you think you were kept from going to the Stock Exchange?

MOORE: No, we were invited to do an interview—I was invited to do an interview with Maria Bartiromo there, on the Closing Bell show. Sorry, I forgot her last name... Right, the Money Honey is what they call her, right? (Laughter) No, that's her...right? I'm not making that up. We were supposed to do the interview on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, which I thought was going to be kind of cool. So I really dressed up for it today.

SCHWARTZ: (Laughs) Like tonight?

MOORE: This [shorts and a tee shirt] is what I had on. But they decided, about an hour beforehand, to not—they said, "Not only will Michael Moore not appear on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange, he cannot even get anywhere near the building." So we had to do the interview out on the street. And frankly, I'm starting to get a complex, because last night I was supposed to do the full hour with Larry King and I got bumped by Paris Hilton! (Laughter, boos) It's true, it's true. I mean, I can take a lot of rejection. You know, I went to high school. (Laughter) Four years of that; it was rough. But no; anyway, Larry has decided to put me on tomorrow night at nine o'clock—but only after re-running the Paris Hilton interview at eight o'clock tomorrow night...

Divesting. Yes, well the nurses have called for this, and I've joined with them. They had a big press conference down there, encouraging people to remove their money from the health insurance companies.

SCHWARTZ: Okay, right down here. (Repeats audience question) So this is a practicing surgeon who works in a middle class area, and is often not able to help people because the hospital can't afford the malpractice insurance and the expenses.

MOORE: Yeah, he said that he used to do surgeries for free, and the hospital said, "Sure, go ahead and

do it.” Now when he wants to do a surgery for free, when somebody doesn’t have the money, the hospital says, “No. You can’t do it.”

Well I’ll tell you, one thing we met along the road here making this film were a lot of demoralized doctors, and some just wanted to get out of it. It’s a very sad thing to see. And you’re right; it wouldn’t be that way if you lived in these other countries. You may not make as much. Like the doctor said there in the film: he makes \$200,000 a year, and he’s happy with that... and he’s a family doctor. And I’m telling you, family doctors in this country now make *nothing*. They spend—you know how you used to go to the doctor and there’d be one person behind the glass taking your appointment, right? There are six people there now, fighting with the insurance companies on the phone, doing the paperwork! Fifteen to thirty percent of the health insurance industry budget goes to administrative paperwork, overhead, red tape, and profit.

Doctors, when they see a Medicare patient come—that’s socialized medicine—they love the Medicare patient, because the government will pay them, right? The government will pay them. The government: their overhead, their bureaucracy to run Medicare/Medicaid? Three percent. Three percent! Private insurance: thirty percent. I mean, it’s outrageous. The Canadians, they spend 1.7 percent of their overall budget on administrative bureaucracy, to administrate a program to every single Canadian across that country! We have been lied to about how, “Government is bad! Government is evil! Government can’t do as good a job as the private sector!” That is just one of the biggest lies, and most Americans have swallowed it.

It just isn’t true, and it’s so sad—especially for older people here who remember when government did to things. Government said, “We’re going to put a man on the moon in eight years.” That’s what we did. Dwight Eisenhower, a Republican president, said, “I’m going to build an interstate highway system to connect this whole country.” That will be compared to the Roman aqueducts hundreds of years from now, that project, to pull that off. Roosevelt: Roosevelt defeated—with the Allies—defeated the Nazis, the Japanese, and Mussolini, in less time than it’s taken us to secure the road from the airport to downtown Baghdad—and we *still* don’t have the road secure! (Applause) All right? We used to know how to *do* things, right? We used to kick some ass and actually accomplish something! The problem isn’t the government—the problem is the people elected to *run* the government and the people they appoint! FEMA is a great idea and we do need FEMA. We don’t need “heck-of-a-job” Brownie! That’s the difference! That’s what we’ve sunk to and—Why am I yelling? (Laughter and applause) I’m sorry.

SCHWARTZ: That’s okay!

MOORE: I just—don’t you feel like the train is just coming down the tracks, and you’re trying to turn the train around, and it seems impossible?

SCHWARTZ: Well, I just want to say that these people would rather see you than Paris Hilton any day. (Applause) And you’ve made a film that’s going to get people talking about these issues, bring some positive change, and you’ve also made a movie that’s really entertaining and moving. So, thank you very much. (Applause)

The Pinewood Dialogues, an ongoing series of discussions with key creative figures in film, television, and digital media, are made possible with a generous grant from the Pannonia Foundation.

Museum of the Moving Image is grateful for the generous support of numerous corporations, foundations, and individuals. The Museum receives vital funding from the City of New York through the New York City Department of Cultural Affairs and the New York City Economic Development Corporation. Additional government support is provided by the New York State Council on the Arts, the Institute of Museum and Library Services, and the Natural Heritage Trust (administered by the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation). The Museum occupies a building owned by the City of New York, and wishes to acknowledge the leadership and assistance of Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg, Queens Borough President Helen M. Marshall, and City Council Member Eric N. Gioia.

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