Doctors, patients both called victims of health programs

WASHINGTON — Doctors and patients alike "are victims of our non system of delivering and financing health care," AFL-CIO Pres. George Meany told a meeting of physicians in the nation's capital.

Talking to the District of Columbia Medical Society, Meany said "the medical care system is a confusing, inefficient, often inaccessible and always expensive piece rate, cost plus, unevenly distributed system.

"The patients pay for it in money and physicians pay for it in long hours."

The federation president assured the doctors there is a "better way" — the Health Security program backed by the AFL-CIO and introduced in Congress by Sen. Edward M. Kennedy (D-Mass.) and Rep. Martha W. Griffiths (D-Mich.).

Organized labor, Meany stressed is proud of America's medical achievements, but it wants that "standard of excellence to be available to all, at a cost that all can afford." It does not mean regimenting doctors or turning them into victims of "socialism," he said.

It means that the patients should have the right to choose his own doctor and his own health care system and that the physician has the right to choose how he wants to practice medicine—on a solo basis or as part of a group.

The fragmentation of medical care the involved form and record keeping, the use of hospitals versus out-patient or office treatment and testing were reviewed by Meany in his talk to the doctors.

He stressed that there is common ground between the physician and the patient and organized labor, that "we are all patients," and that there is a common understanding of health both in terms of sickness and finances.

Under the Health Security program Meany stressed, "you could practice medicine the way you've always wanted to. You could give the patient the care your best professional judgment tells you he needs—no more, no less."

The program would not own nor run the hospitals, he said. It would not employ doctors, and no doctor would be forced to practice under the program.

But the Health Security program would help eliminate the waste of duplicate and overlapping facilities and would help train more health manpower, he noted.

The approach to health care advanced by the American Medical Association — Medicredit — Meany characterized as "a backdoor approach when we should be going through the front door."

He termed the Nixon program the "fall back" position of the AMA, that also fails to meet the needs and is basically sickness insurance rather than health care. The AFL-CIO president summed up:

"The great debate over national health insurance has moved from union halls and meetings of social workers to meetings such as this one. That is good.

"It would be better if the debate now moved past invective, scare techniques and fear to an honest appraisal of all programs."

Labor wants fast action on cancer

The AFL-CIO has called on the Labor Department to take emergency action to head off a massive epidemic of cancer among workers exposed to asbestos dust.

In a letter to Labor Secretary James D. Hodgson, George R. R. Taylor, executive secretary of the AFL-CIO Standing Committee on Safety and Occupational Health, submitted a study showing that growing use of asbestos in industry has brought "appallingly high" rates of cancer among the five million workers involved.

The study was prepared by Dr. Irving J. Selikoff and the staff of the Mount Sinai Medical School, the AFL-CIO and the Ad Hoc Committee on the Asbestos Hazard of the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department.

It showed that workers exposed to asbestos dust suffer triple the incidence of all kinds of cancer as workers in general and six times the normal rate of lung cancer.

"Only drastic and immediate action will contain and slow the developing incidence and prevalence of death from these diseases," Taylor warned Hodgson. He urged the Secretary to issue an emergency bulletin warning of the danger and requiring employers to take stringent measures to reduce their concentration of asbestos dust in all work places.

He also called on Hodgson to ask the Environmental Protection Agency to consider taking "imminent danger" measures under the Clean Air Act to protect residents near plants where asbestos is used.

Asking Hodgson to meet with labor representatives within 30 days to chart further action, Taylor added: "We are well aware of the difficulty of the tasks before you and pledge our full cooperation."

Some disabled veterans, under certain conditions, are eligible for VA grants of 50 per cent up to a maximum of $12,500, toward the cost of "wheelchair" homes (equipped with ramps, etc.).

Blind LR woman still manages to do her own household duties

LITTLE ROCK — "With joy in the doing" best describes Mrs. Pearlie Lyles, a homemaker in Pulaski County, reports Mrs. Colleen Owen, associate Extension home economist-nutrition.

Mrs. Lyles lives in the Booker Homes area and is the mother of seven children. She has been blind since childhood but achieves many things that sighted homemakers might envy.

Mrs. Lyles participates in the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program of the Agricultural Extension Service. She works with Mrs. Mary Coston, nutrition program aide, in learning how to buy and prepare food for her family. Mrs. Lyles says that before she started working with Mrs. Coston, her food choices were very limited because she could not read recipes or directions. Mrs. Coston has helped her learn many new recipes by going over them with her, and recording them on tape. She has learned how to prepare vegetables for better balanced meals and to put some vegetables in the freezer. Her next project will be to learn to make yeast breads.

Mrs. Lyles regards her blindness as an inconvenience to be overcome, not something that will stop her from doing the things she wants to do.

Rubber Workers re-elect Bommarito

BAR HARBOUR, Fla. — Peter Bommarito, United Rubber Workers (URW) International president, was reelected a vice president and Executive Council member of the AFL-CIO at the biennial convention Nov. 22.

Bommarito, 56, has been on the council for the past two years. He has been president of the 212,000-member URW since 1966, and was URW International vice president six years previously. He is a native of Detroit and a past president of URW Local [illegible] Uniroyal plant there.

Bommarito is a vice president of the AFL-CIO Industrial Union Department, Maritime Trades Department and the Union Label and Service Trades Department.

He is also vice president of the International Federation of Chemical and General Workers Unions, and recently was chairman of a world-wide Rubber and Plastics Conference sponsored by that organization in Geneva, Switzerland.

A World War II Marine, Bommarito is active in Summit County (Ohio) United Fund, the Salvation Army and on various civic committees.

He and his wife, Dorothy, live in Mogadore, Ohio.

Minorities are making steady progress in the apprenticeable trades. Nearly 12 per cent of all new apprentices registered in 1970 were minority group members, compared with 10 per cent in 1969. The number of registered apprentices in all trades was at a record 260,000 last year.

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