

Cong Reed
Sen Fawcett

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- Cy Bruffield
- Leonard Davis
- Fred Fossen
Bernard Nash

REMARKS OF SENATOR HUBERT H. HUMPHREY

LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL MEETING

AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF RETIRED PERSONS

NATIONAL RETIRED TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

ROOM 1202 NEW SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

MARCH 10, 1971

THERE IS NO LONGER ANY QUESTION ABOUT THE NEED FOR REFORM IN THE AMERICAN HEALTH CARE SYSTEM. THERE IS ALMOST UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT THAT SOMETHING MUST BE DONE.

WE AMERICANS SPENT AN ASTRONOMICAL \$70 BILLION ON HEALTH CARE LAST YEAR, YET WE ARE FAR FROM BEING THE HEALTHIEST NATION IN THE WORLD. WE ARE THE ONLY INDUSTRIALIZED WESTERN NATION THAT DOES NOT PROVIDE SOME FORM OF NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE SYSTEM FOR ITS CITIZENS.

THE QUESTION, THEN, IS NOT WHETHER SOMETHING MUST BE DONE, BUT WHAT AND HOW.

IT SEEMS THAT JUST ABOUT EVERYBODY THINKS HE HAS THE ANSWER TO THAT QUESTION, JUDGING FROM ALL THE LEGISLATION WE'VE SEEN IN THE SEVEN WEEKS SINCE THE 92D CONGRESS CONVENED AND FROM ALL THE SPEECHES WE'VE HEARD.

MANY . . . PROBABLY MOST OF THESE HAVE GENUINE MERIT. I
HAPPEN TO SUPPORT THE HEALTH SECURITY ACT, WHICH SENATOR
KENNEDY WILL DISCUSS WITH YOU IN MORE DETAIL LATER, BECAUSE IT
COMES THE CLOSEST TO ACCOMPLISHING WHAT I FEEL MUST BE DONE IF
WE ARE TO ACHIEVE THE GOAL OF MAKING THIS THE HEALTHIEST NATION
IN THE WORLD.

and
IF THE PRESIDENT AGREES SOMETHING MUST BE DONE. HE
RECENTLY SENT TO CONGRESS WHAT MAY BE THE MOST FAR REACHING
HEALTH PROGRAM EVER PROPOSED BY ANY PRESIDENT, ALTHOUGH I SHOULD
REMINDE YOU THAT MORE THAN 20 YEARS AGO PRESIDENT TRUMAN CALLED
FOR NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE.

THE BASIC CHARACTERISTIC OF PRESIDENT NIXON'S PROPOSAL IS
ITS RELIANCE ON PRESERVING THE STATUS QUO.

THE PRESIDENT WANTS TO RETAIN THE PRESENT SYSTEM BUT REARRANGE THE ELEMENTS A LITTLE BETTER. IT IS BUILT AROUND THE PRIVATE INSURANCE INDUSTRY AND IT PERPETUATES THE EXISTING DOUBLE STANDARD OF MEDICAL PURCHASING POWER BY FAILING TO PROVIDE AN EQUAL LEVEL OF CARE FOR ALL THE AMERICAN PEOPLE.

ON THE OTHER HAND, ONE OF ITS STRONGEST POINTS IS THE PRESIDENT'S ADVOCACY OF THE PRINCIPLE OF GROUP PRACTICES. AS A LONG-TIME ADVOCATE OF GROUP PRACTICE AS AN EFFICIENT, EFFECTIVE, ECONOMICAL METHOD OF PROVIDING COMPREHENSIVE HEALTH SERVICES, I WELCOME MR. NIXON'S SUPPORT FOR EFFORTS TO BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS ERECTED BY 22 STATES TO PROHIBIT OR LIMIT GROUP PRACTICES.

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WE AMERICANS ARE BLESSED WITH EXCELLENT MEDICAL TECHNOLOGY,

THE WORLD'S BEST TRAINED DOCTORS AND NURSES, THE FINEST
SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND TREATMENT FACILITIES.

THE PROBLEM, TO PUT IT SIMPLY, IS ONE OF AN IMBALANCE
BETWEEN SUPPLY AND DEMAND. BUT NOT ONLY ARE WE SUFFERING
FROM A SHORTAGE OF PERSONNEL AND FACILITIES, THAT WHICH WE DO
HAVE IS POORLY DISTRIBUTED GEOGRAPHICALLY.

WE MUST URGENTLY EXPAND THE SUPPLY AND MAKE IT AVAILABLE
TO ALL THE AMERICAN PEOPLE AT PRICES EVERYONE CAN AFFORD TO
PAY.

HOW BEST TO ACCOMPLISH THIS IS THE PRIMARY DIFFERENCE
AMONG THE VARIOUS PROPOSALS PUT FORTH IN THE CONGRESS.

THERE ARE THOSE, LIKE THE PRESIDENT, WHO FEEL IT CAN BEST BE DONE BY PRESERVING THE PRESENT SYSTEM AND JUST MOVING ABOUT A FEW OF THE PARTS.

OTHER PROPOSALS IN THIS CATEGORY INCLUDE THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION'S MEDICREDIT, THE AMERICAN HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION'S AMERIPLAN.

AND ON THE OTHER SIDE ARE THOSE -- AND THIS GROUP INCLUDES ME -- WHO BELIEVE WE NEED A FUNDAMENTAL REFORM IN BOTH THE DELIVERY AND THE FINANCING OF HEALTH CARE.

THE STATUS QUO PROPONENTS ARGUE ALONG WITH THE PRESIDENT THAT "WE CANNOT SIMPLY BUY OUR WAY TO BETTER MEDICINE."

TO THAT ARGUMENT I WOULD REPLY: YOU MAY BE RIGHT, BUT
KEEP IN MIND THAT NOTHING IS FREE AND YOU GET WHAT YOU PAY
FOR. IT TAKES MORE THAN RHETORIC AND PROMISES AND MADISON-
AVENUE HEALTH MESSAGES TO DO THE JOB WHICH WE ALL KNOW URGENTLY NEEDS
DOING.

THE PATIENT -- IN THIS CASE, THE SYSTEM OF HEALTH CARE IN
AMERICA -- IS IN CRITICAL CONDITION AND NEEDS MAJOR SURGERY,
PERHAPS AN ORGAN TRANSPLANT. BUT DR. NIXON SAYS, "THAT'S
TOO EXPENSIVE. JUST TAKE TWO ASPIRIN AND CALL ME IN THE
MORNING."

GOVERNMENT CANNOT PERMIT ITSELF TO BE STINGY WHEN IT COMES
TO THE HEALTH OF ITS CITIZENS. GOOD HEALTH IS GOOD ECONOMICS
AND GOOD GOVERNMENT.

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UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION PROPOSAL, THE POOR, THE NEAR POOR AND THE ELDERLY WOULD GET FAR LESS PROTECTION THAN THE REST OF THE POPULATION.

FOR THE ELDERLY MEDICARE PATIENT, THE ADMINISTRATION WOULD ELIMINATE THE MONTHLY \$5.30 PAYMENT FOR OUT-OF-HOSPITAL DOCTOR'S SERVICES BUT THEY WOULD HAVE THE INDIVIDUAL START PAYING A SHARE OF HIS HOSPITAL COSTS ON THE 13TH DAY INSTEAD OF THE 61ST, AS AT PRESENT,

MANY OF THESE PEOPLE ARE ON FIXED INCOMES, AND IT WILL BE AN ADDED BURDEN ON THEM WHEN THE DEDUCTIBLE THAT COMES OUT OF THEIR OWN POCKETS WHEN THEY MUST SEE A DOCTOR RISES AS THE COST-OF-LIVING GOES UP. ALL THIS MORE THAN OUTWEIGHS THE MONTHLY SAVINGS OF \$5.30 THAT THE ADMINISTRATION BOASTS ABOUT UNDER ITS PLAN.

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LARGE DEDUCTIBLES, COPAYMENTS AND PRE-PAYMENTS CHARACTERIZE ALL FACETS OF THE ADMINISTRATION HEALTH PROPOSALS -- IN AN EFFORT TO KEEP THE GOVERNMENT'S COSTS DOWN. BUT THEY DO NOTHING TO HELP THE INDIVIDUAL, THE HEALTH CONSUMER WHO MUST PAY THESE BILLS. HE GETS LITTLE RELIEF.

DEDUCTIBLES, COPAYMENTS AND PREPAYMENTS SUCH AS THEY PROPOSE COULD BE A HARDSHIP FOR MIDDLE-INCOME FAMILIES AND EVEN WORSE BURDEN FOR ELDERLY PERSONS AND OTHERS ON FIXED INCOMES.

THIS IS A HEALTH INDUSTRY-INSURANCE COMPANY PROGRAM, AND THAT IS NOT WHAT WE NEED. WE SHOULD HAVE A CONSUMER PROGRAM THAT GIVES THE PERSON WHO PAYS THE BILLS A MAJOR VOICE IN SETTING POLICY AND RUNNING THE SYSTEM. OF COURSE, THE MEDICAL PROFESSION ALSO WILL BE A PARTNER, BUT NOT A DICTATOR.

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I TOLD YOU THAT OF ALL THE PRESENT PROPOSALS I PREFER THE HEALTH SECURITY ACT OF 1971. THIS IS NOT BECAUSE I BELIEVE IT IS PERFECT, BUT BECAUSE I ENDORSE THE CONCEPT IT EXPRESSES, AND I FEEL IT COMES CLOSER THAN ANY OTHER TO WHAT MUST BE DONE.

THE TIME HAS COME FOR GENUINE REFORM IN HEALTH CARE. I DON'T KNOW JUST WHAT FORM IT WILL TAKE, BUT I INTEND TO BE DEEPLY INVOLVED.

I HAVE DEDICATED MYSELF TO MAKING IMPROVED HEALTH SERVICES FOR ALL 206 MILLION AMERICANS A MATTER OF TOP PRIORITY. I WANT TO SEE THIS 92D CONGRESS GO DOWN IN HISTORY AS THE "HEALTH CONGRESS."

I SINCERELY HOPE THE PRESIDENT AND HIS ADMINISTRATION WILL
WORK WITH THE CONGRESS TO DEVELOP A BIPARTISAN NATIONAL HEALTH
PROGRAM THAT WILL MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL AMERICANS.

BUT WE CANNOT DO IT ALONE. WE WILL NEED YOUR HELP. THAT
IS WHY I AM CALLING ON YOU -- AND ALL THE AMERICAN PEOPLE --
TO JOIN IN A GREAT NATIONAL DEBATE OVER HOW WE SHALL CONSTRUCT
THE NATION'S HEALTH CARE SYSTEM.

WE ALREADY ARE THE WEALTHIEST, MOST SCIENTIFICALLY
ADVANCED NATION IN THE HISTORY OF THE WORLD -- NOW LET US JOIN
TOGETHER TO MAKE THE UNITED STATES THE HEALTHIEST NATION ON EARTH.

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