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Economic ills empty hospitals

by Catherine Siegner

Portland hospitals have not escaped the bite of economic recession and inflation, as a survey by the *Observer* reveals.

Reaganomics and its attendant budget cutbacks are reflected in more empty beds, fewer elective operations, and in some cases, temporary staff layoffs and floor closures.

Here is a rundown of the situation at several area hospitals:

• **Emanuel:** A hospital source indicated the average census is down a significant amount.

"All hospitals are experiencing the same thing. Anytime you get that big a drop it's bound to affect the hospital," the source said.

There have been no layoffs as yet at Emanuel, but attrition (lowering staff levels by not replacing workers who leave) is being utilized, according to the source.

One indication of recession's effect is the larger proportion of pa-

tients treated under Medicare and Medicaid programs. At Emanuel, where such patients comprise approximately 10% of total patient load, that figure has gone up substantially.

All hospitals must treat a certain number of patients without charge, as required by the Hill-Burton Act. Since many in Portland have increased their share of no-fee patients, it is assumed they would rather have beds occupied by non-paying or government-reimbursed cases than to have those beds remain empty.

• **Good Samaritan:** Patient load at Good Sam in NW Portland is down to 501 from the licensed level of 539, according to E. Byron Smith, vice-president for corporate affairs.

"Our business is definitely down over a period of the last three months," says Smith. "It was also true the winter of 1973-74."

Smith says Good Sam has temporarily closed floors, but that

"we do it every year. Everybody who can go home does through Christmas to the end of the year. We did have one small unit closed this fall and the patients consolidated."

As far as Hill-Burton patients go, Good Sam has "always exceeded" its share, Smith says.

"45% (of patients) are covered by welfare or Medicare. Only 12% are self-paying, and a lot of that is money from co-insurance (patients pay part of the fee, similar to a deductible)," he explains. "Cash payments don't amount to more than 10% of our business."

Smith admits the economic situation has kept some people from attaining medical coverage. "People who don't have it are those who fall between the cracks—those who are unemployed or who are disabled and are not eligible for welfare," he says.

What about Reagan's so-called "safety net" that he claimed would be there to help poor people main-

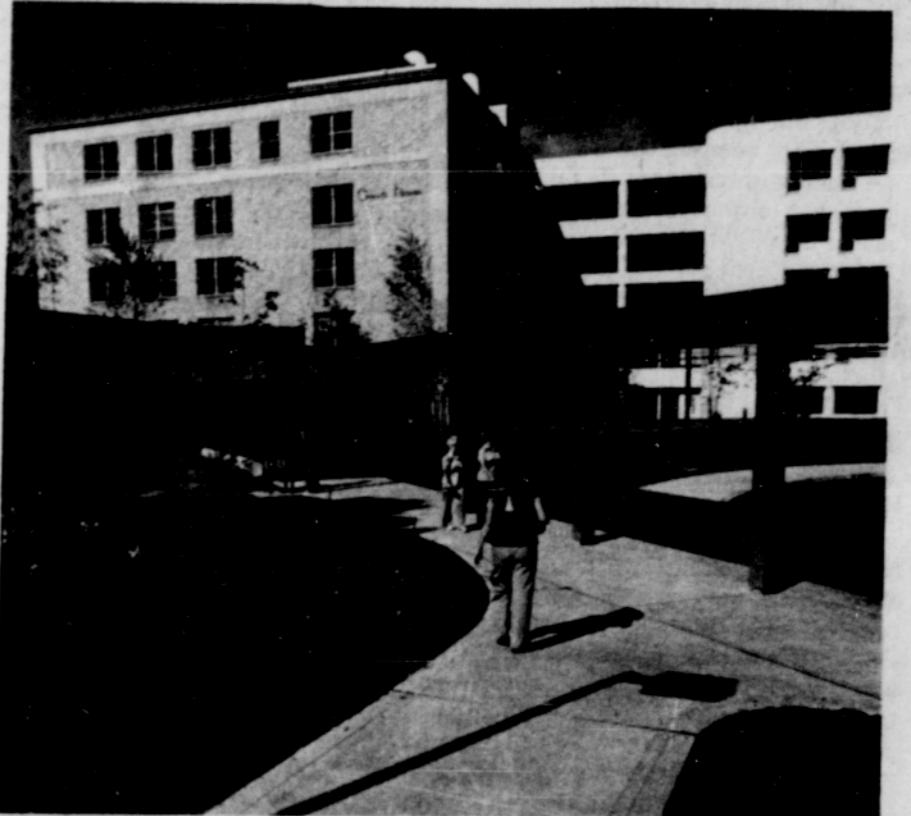
tain some level of health care despite budget cuts?

"The Reagan administration has not to my knowledge advanced any plan for health care," Smith replies, but "the time for a national health care plan just isn't right for it now. I think there will be some plan—probably for catastrophic care."

Smith believes the current economic situation won't last because "nothing is stagnant." Hospital business will adjust to accommodate the "graying of America"—the rise in the over-65 age group—and elderly care will be a focus, he adds.

"As far as traditional care, it's changing."

• **Providence:** This NE Portland hospital is in a similar position to the others. "We've had a low census for quite a while," says Information Specialist Sister Mary Margaret Lang. "I haven't seen the December figures yet, but they usually drop because of Christmas time—people don't want to go into the hospital." (Please turn to page 11 column 1)



EMANUEL HOSPITAL

Feds find no civil rights violation in possums

The U.S. Department of Justice has announced that a federal investigation of Portland's "possum incident" has ended with no finding of criminal wrongdoing.

The possums were killed by on-duty police officers and deposited in front of the Burger Barn, a Black owned restaurant, on March 12th. Officers Craig Ward and James Galloway were dismissed but reinstated following an arbitration hearing. The other officers involved were not disciplined.

The FBI, under the supervision of

the Justice Department's Civil Rights Bureau, investigated the case to determine if there had been a violation of civil rights.

Commissioner Charles Jordan, who was Police Commissioner at the time of the incident and was pulled from the job during the arbitration hearing by Mayor Ivancie, said he had not been officially notified of the decision. "When I read about it in the paper I wasn't surprised -- I didn't expect any more."

Jordan has maintained that the

incident was a violation of the civil rights of the property owners, George and Geraldine Powe, but that it was not racially motivated.

"What does it take to violate someone's civil rights," he asked. "This is not a rhetorical question. If this was not a violation of civil rights, then I really don't know what it takes to prove a civil rights violation and I doubt that the average person on the street would understand."

"I didn't think the government would do anything about it.

Perhaps if we had a financially healthy NAACP, which could hire the best attorneys, then there could have been a better fight and the outcome would have been different."

Jordan said neither the FBI nor the Justice Department had interviewed him, but that they apparently had made their investigation from the record.

The Powes have filed a federal court suit alleging the incident violated their constitutional rights, seeking \$3.8 million in damages.

Federal grand jury investigates Black groups

In the past the government has generally been concerned with what it viewed as openly progressive or radical underground Black groups. But now a shift is developing.

An even broader range of Black oriented affiliations will be scrutinized by a federal grand jury that is planning hearings in a number of large cities including Chicago and Los Angeles, as well as other urban centers where Black organizations have sizeable membership rolls.

The Black Press Institute, in Chicago, has learned that under a regulation used to investigate the Mafia a federal grand jury will look into possible linkages between respected Black organizations and terrorist groups.

The grand jury will use the Rack-

eteering Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (RICO) statute to order Blacks to testify about the organizations they belong to. The grand jury will want to know about membership, financial support and organizational structure, and Blacks who are subpoenaed but fail to show up to testify will be charged with contempt of court and then jailed if they fail to cooperate.

Many Blacks fear the probe may intimidate present or potential group members and discourage needed contributions.

The grand jury probe is expected to include: selected civil rights organizations; Black professional alliances; Black cultural groups; community-based "grassroots" organizations; Black political organiza-

tions and college-based groups that recruit Black students.

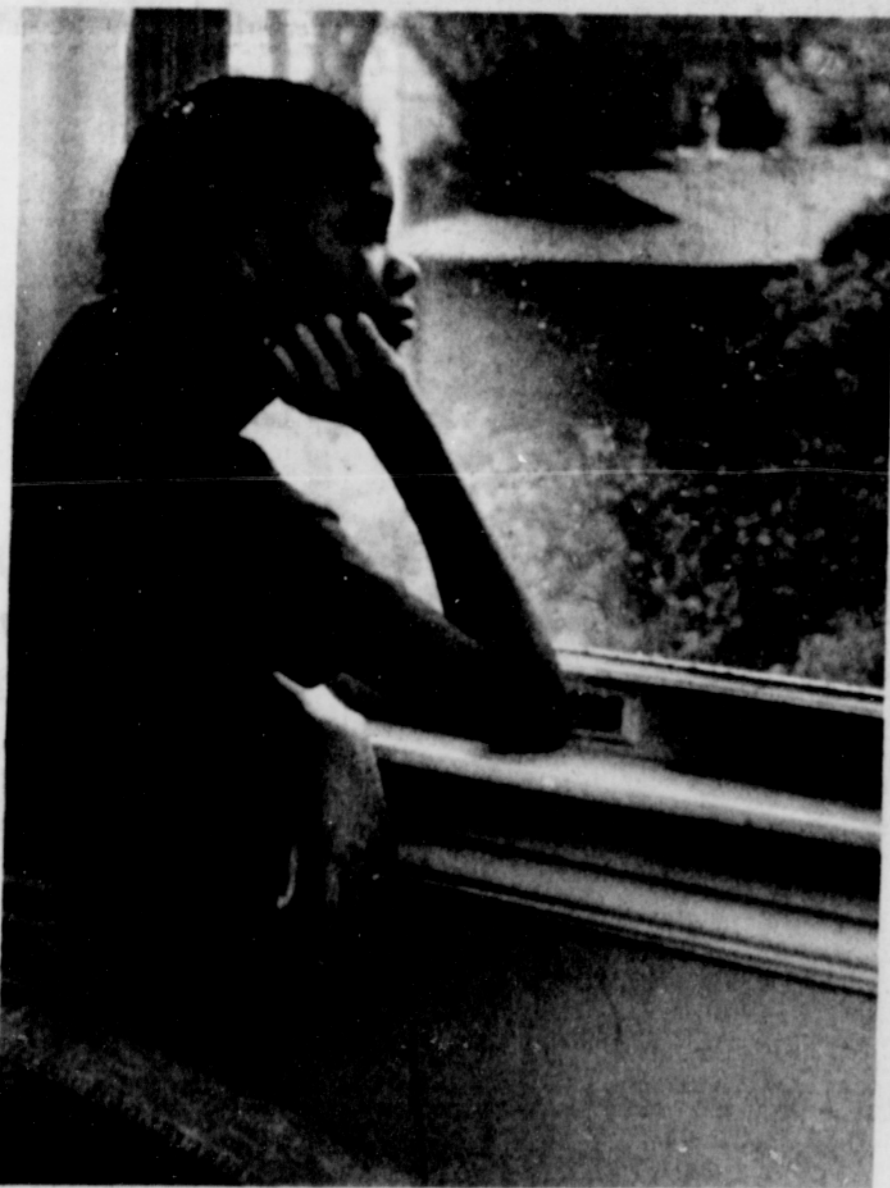
A Black woman in New York, Yaasmyn Fula, is now serving what could be an 18-month jail sentence because she refused to tell a grand jury about her group: the National Task Force for COINTELPRO Litigation and Research. Fula, a paralegal, was asked to divulge information about her clients. Her attorney, Lewis Myers, said she was jailed despite protections under the sixth amendment to the Constitution which involve attorney-client privileges.

Cointelpro was the FBI's effort to use informants to spy on Black groups and discredit them in the 1970s. Later, the National Security Council urged officials to perpetu-

ate divisions between Black groups, derail leaders and thwart ties between Blacks in the U.S. and Blacks in Africa.

The thrust behind the coming RICO probe began after the Oct. 20th attempted robbery of \$1.6 million from a Brink's truck in New York City. A grand jury was called on to study connections between Black groups—the Black Panthers, Black Liberation Army and the Republic of New Afrika—and the white radical Weather Underground.

Now the grand jury wants to examine the viability of other Black groups and look for connections with "Black radicals." Critics feel the nation's conservative political climate makes it suitable for the hearings to take place—secretly.



Rainy Day: Serena Brown contemplates sunny days of summer while Christmas vacation drifts by.

(Photo: Richard J. Brown)

This New Year, beware of redheads

by Kathryn Lindeman
Smithsonian News Service

As you're quaffing your last toast to the New Year, beating on a noisemaker or pondering that final, most important resolution, you might well ask yourself, "What's all the fuss about?"

Well, be reassured; generations before you have made the same to-do... and then some.

As a Druid in old England, you would have gathered mistletoe from sacred trees to give as New Year's gifts.

Or you might have gone "first footing" in Scotland. After a midnight church service, Scottish homes

were open to visitors, and it was said that a family's luck for the year would depend on who first crossed the threshold.

You would have been heartily welcomed as a first visitor that night if you were a dark-haired man. On the other hand, if you were a woman, a redhead, a beggar or a person with a squint, your foot first in the door would portend bad luck. Homeowners even got in the habit of paying dark-haired men to be there early.

A Russian custom would have required that you beat the corners of your house with sticks to drive out Satan around the new year.

How about "wassailing" your

apple tree, as British farmers were wont to do, by sprinkling it with cider and singing a song for a good crop in the coming year?

If you were a king in ancient Babylon, you would have been stripped of your royal robe, made to kneel and then solemnly boxed on the ears and tweaked on the nose by the high priest as part of the official New Year's festival.

At a New Year's Eve party in Derbyshire, England, you might have fished for a ring in a "posset" pot. To foretell who would marry during the following year, the hostess dropped her wedding ring into the pot of hot spiced milk and wine,

and the singles tried to pick up the ring with each ladleful of the beverage. If a guest succeeded, it was a sure omen that he would wed that year.

Gift giving, visiting friends, driving out evil and foretelling events of the coming year are but a few New Year's customs that have been carried on through the ages. New Year's is one holiday that just about everyone around the world, Westerners and Easterners, celebrate in some fashion on some set date.

Recorded history shows that for more than 5,000 years people have had some way of recognizing the beginning of a new year. In support of

the time-honored concept of annual rebirth or renewal, rituals and celebrations have been the order of the day.

The day, however, has not always been observed on the first of January by many of the world's nations. In fact, the new year has been launched on Christmas, Easter, the autumnal equinox, the winter solstice and March 25 (around the time of the vernal equinox). March 25 seems to have been one of the most often celebrated dates because it was the time for sowing crops, the first step in the annual agricultural cycle.

The Romans apparently were the first, in 153 B.C., to mark Jan. 1 as the beginning of the year. That was

just part of their numerous calendar reforms aimed at making man's schedule agree with nature's cycles. But it wasn't until the Gregorian calendar, the same one we use today, was instituted by Pope Gregory in 1582 that Jan. 1 began to gain wide acceptance. The day's proximity to the winter solstice, when the days begin to lengthen, made it a logical beginning.

The rites of New Year's have long helped people make through the coming year in the best possible way—whether it was winning out over evil, producing a good crop or avoiding a death in the family. (Please turn to page 9 column 1)