

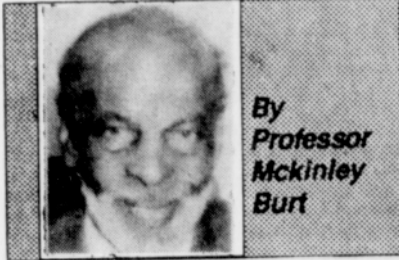
# EDITORIAL

The Portland Observer

## p e r s p e c t i v e s

### Can Politicians Reform Health Care In America?

It was this past spring that I wrote a three-part series here, "The Color of Health". The far-ranging topics ranged from apprehensions over a huge federally-funded research project to study a possible "Crime/Genes" connection among African Americans (3/10/93) to new initiatives for large-scale programs to screen black children for 'behavioral problems' and treat them with drugs (3/24/93).



By  
Professor  
Mckinley  
Burt

There has been no lessening of these assaults and we will continue to keep you advised. However, as you are quite aware, the status of all our health--from infants to the aged--is a matter of over-riding concern to the nation and a major topic in the media. We find ourselves distraught that America has the most disgraceful rate of infant mortality among, the indus-

trial nations--and on the other hand, while U.S. life expectancy has hit a new high of 75.5 years, this has brought about serious problems of maintaining wellness in the longer "golden" years. A lot of special concerns in funding the increased medical needs by both federal and private providers have arisen. In between, a disaster mode.

As recently as August 25 I used this column to bring us up to date on the "Oregon Health Plan", as disappointing an exercise as that may have been to you. I reported on the continued lack of clarity and direction in the planning and, worst of all, absolutely no consensus on the method of funding. However, the local and state uncertainties pale into insignificance when we consider the chaotic national pic-

ture. We are being forced to a frightening question: Was there ever a 'Clinton Health Plan'? or just politics?

A neighbor of mine has reiterated an earlier caustic complaint, "I didn't vote for Hillary Rodman Clinton for 'Health Czar' or any other responsible position in the new administration, and now my worst fears are realized. After that glitzy introduction as the most knowledgeable and competent health care specialist to emerge on the American scene, we find ourselves awash in absolute confusion without a clue as to how to solve a problem of this magnitude. Since we didn't elect her, who do we hold responsible?"

Who indeed? First, I think we should all concede that it was naive and preposterous for any of us to expect that a national/social problem of this magnitude to be solved overnight or in one year or in even one administration. The situation

was decades in developing and, like the "deficit" debacle, reported by media, derided by politicians and suffered by the sick and disabled. But, like the economic mess, those in charge of our social systems knew full well that they themselves were part of the problem--a major part! And we need look no further than that litany of accusations and cross charges among the health providers (most of whom took the Hippocratic Oath). The Savings and Loan rascals were amateurs.

The major drug companies have made unconscionable profits with their prices allegedly raised to cover development and testing, but actually to finance marketing, wars, acquisitions and enhancement of the bottom line. And we have just noted that these major political contributors will not be burdened by police controls. Many local pharmacists across the country should not be left out of these

'think-and-grow-rich' schemes, though mail order and group providers are helping in some cost-cutting.

There must be a "A National Association of Senior Blue Cross Executives", considering the emerging national pattern of their super compensation and perks. The million-dollar salaries of many are quadruple the pay of managers in industry with comparable duties. Of course, this is the 'tip of the iceberg' in the 'Managed Care' field; the media likes to get attention for its alleged revelations by using highly-recognizable names like "Blue Cross". There are many similar providers with tickets on this health care gravy train.

Speaking of the "media", how is it they are just now discovering many of these rip offs that have escalated health cost beyond the capability of so many beyond maintenance of a decent quality of life? Could it be that the advertising revenues from the health industry constitute a major

part of their profits? "Me thinks thou doth protest too much". Just lately, we find that the big medical testing labs have been ripping off billions in overcharges, unnecessary tests (with connivance), and for services not performed. Victimized have been government programs like Medicare, Medicaid, Veterans and in addition, hospitals, clinics and consumers.

That is just the beginning of the mess we were told "Hillary" was going to solve. There is the collusion between the industry giants in lens manufacturing and local dispensers of contact lenses: oculists, et. The idea is to withhold prescription information from the mail order firms so that prices can be maintained at an artificial level. I could go on for page after page but you get the idea. I haven't mentioned the blocking of the American Medical Association in health care reform--or other professional associations, manufacturers. The yearly take could be a "trillion".

### Legal Aid Series 17: Proof Needed For Government Benefit Programs

For those who need it, the government can provide a helping hand through welfare programs. But that hand keeps a tight grip on its cash and almost always asks for proof you qualify.

Whenever you apply for public assistance such as food stamps, emergency assistance, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (ADC) or other welfare programs, Adult and Family Services (AFS) will ask for verification. This just means proof. AFS will ask you to prove basic facts like where your child was born, where you live and how you pay rent. You must prove to AFS you qualify for these programs, but sometimes proof you give for one program could cover another. For example, verification for ADC may also work for food stamps. AFS has the final say on what proof is required, but they must be reasonable about it. And if you can't get the verification yourself, they must help you get it.

To receive ADC, you must provide proof of your identity, address, citizenship or alien status and Social Security number or application for one. You must also show AFS proof of your income, such as wage stubs, as well as information about assets, like

bank accounts, inheritance, cars or worker's compensation benefits. For your kids, you must prove their ages and school attendance, and that you're related to or taking care of them. AFS may also seek information about the father or fathers, to seek child support. But you can be excused from this requirement if you're afraid of the father.

To get food stamps, you have to prove your identity, mailing address, alien status or citizenship, Social Security number, income, utility costs and medical expenses if you want to claim them as a deduction. If you lost your job or got your wages cut, you must show you had good cause for doing so. For expedited or emergency food stamps, you only need to provide proof of your identity. AFS cannot hold these up if you can't provide proof of your identity. AFS cannot hold these up if you can't provide other information. But you must provide the other required information before they'll give you next month's food stamps.

There are several ways you can verify information for AFS. The first is called documentary, which means written proof. It can include a driver's license, rent receipt, birth certificate,

Social Security card or a written statement from you or someone you know.

Another way is through a collateral contact, which is when you get a friend, neighbor or family member to verify something for you. Sometimes they can go to AFS, or your worker can talk to them over the phone. It's usually best, though, to have that person provide proof in a written statement. This is called an affidavit. Information given in an affidavit must be firsthand and should include things like your name and the name of the person giving the statement, how long that person has known you and the actual information sought. For example, your neighbor could write that he or she has known you 10 years and has never seen the father visit your children. Affidavits can be handwritten or typed, but must always be notarized by a notary public, that you have sworn under oath the facts in the affidavit are true, and that the notary public has signed and put a seal on the affidavit. Many banks have notary publics, or you can get it done at Multnomah County Legal Aid, where you can also pick up an affidavit form.

If you can't provide written proof of your living situation, AFS may verify it by visiting your home. If the

visit is for food stamps, you must be notified in advance. You can refuse any unscheduled visits, and this can't be used as reason to deny benefits, but it may delay them. An AFS worker cannot go through your closets or drawers without your permission during one of these visits.

AFS accepts various types of proof to verify any number of things for people seeking welfare. If you need to prove you're related to your children and don't have a birth certificate, you can use medical or hospital birth records, a baptismal certificate, adoption papers, a family bible, a birthday or baby book, a birth announcement from a newspaper or statements from friends or relative who knew you when your child was born. To prove you're the caretaker of the kids, use custody papers, divorce papers, or a letter or statement from the parent, a friend or relative.

You may be asked to prove something simple, like where you live. To do this, the best thing to show is a rental agreement, or lease. If you don't have one, you could use a library card, mail received at that address, utility bills, rent receipts, your driver's license, your voter registration card, school records or a state-

ment from your landlord or neighbor. If you have none of these, you can use a collateral contact or ask for a home visit. Showing you're a U.S. citizen or legal alien, however, can be difficult, even if you've lived here all your life. But you can prove this through a birth certificate, hospital records, a passport, an alien registration card, an immigration record or a statement from a friend or relative who has known you all your life.

Even after providing all this information, you may still be asked for more. AFS can seek all kinds of facts about you. They must know your income, if you have any savings or other money, if you have property, among other things. Proving your income can be done by showing pay stubs, self-employment records, a statement from your employers, wage records, union records. You can prove you have no income by providing unpaid bills or statements from people who loaned you money for living expenses.

If asked to verify your assets, you can use bank books or statements, tax returns, mortgage statements, credit union records, credit applications or a car title. To show your child's other

parent is absent from the home, use divorce papers, a restraining order from the court, a statement from the absent parent, mail received at the absent parent's new address, statements from friends, relatives or neighbors or a statement from the person the absent parent lives with. If receiving public assistance due to a disability, you must provide a statement from a doctor, osteopath, psychiatrist or psychologist. The doctor's statement must contain a diagnosis, a prognosis (how long you'll be disabled), test results, medical records or other evidence of your disability. Legal aid has the forms for your doctor to complete.

Remember, your worker has to be reasonable in accepting verification from you and must get it if you can't do it yourself. If you have questions or problems, call Legal Aid's Welfare Rights Hotline at 241-4111.

Multnomah County Legal Aid Service provides legal advice and representation to low-income people living in Multnomah County having welfare problems. Appointments may be made by calling our North/Northeast Community Law Office (on the Portland Community College Cascade Campus) at 295-9494.

### Broadway Bridge Closure

Multnomah County Transportation Division announces the closure of the Broadway Bridge. The bridge will be closed to all vehicular, pedestrian, and bicycle traffic on Sunday, September 12, 1993, between 7am and 5pm. Multnomah County Transportation Division, Bridges Section will be undertaking repairs and maintenance of the bridge.

Tri-Met service will necessarily

be rerouted, please contact Tri-Met customer services at 238-RIDE (7433). River traffic will not be affected by the bridge closure.

The public is advised to use alternate routes this period. Multnomah County is undertaking this action to assure the safety of the traveling public and regrets any temporary inconvenience this may cause.

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### Oregon Lottery Funds Push Self Enhancement, Inc. Capital Campaign Over The Halfway Mark

In last month's race for Oregon Lottery dollars, Portland's inner-city children were clear winners. Self Enhancement (SEI), a nationally-recognized Portland program serving at-risk youth, was awarded \$1.2 million in Oregon Lottery funds. The contribution put the organization over the halfway mark in raising money to build a community center in North Portland.

"This is an incredible vote of confidence from the legislature," said Ray Leary, SEI's director of development. "Lawmakers listened and responded to the hundreds of letters and phone calls from SEI supporters." The State of Oregon's commitment is the largest single contribution to SEI's capital campaign.

"This campaign has been all about momentum," Leary continued. "Fi-

nancially, we have reached a point where it's not a question of if we break ground on the Center for Self Enhancement, but when."

SEI's capital campaign has raised more than \$4.2 million for the Center for Self Enhancement. Other recent contributors include:

- Nordstrom: \$25,000
- Northwest Natural Gas: \$20,000
- Boyd's Coffee: \$15,000
- West One Bank: \$10,000

These groups join a broad-based assembly of organizations that support SEI's capital campaign, including U.S. Bancorp, the Chiles Foundation, the Wessinger Foundation, Standard Insurance, First Interstate Bank, Bank of America and Sisters of Providence. The City of Portland has donated the use of land at Unthank Park, valued at \$750,000.

## Fulani!

### Show Takes A Look At Black-Gay Relations

On Tuesday, September 7 on channel 33 at 5:30pm and Sunday, September 12 on channel 11 at 5:30pm Dr. Lenora B. Fulani, two-time Presidential candidate and national chairperson of the New Alliance Party, interviews Kurt Parrish, from Gay Men of African Descent (GMAD). GMAD is a seven year old organization interested in the health, education and political empowerment of black gay men. Hailing from Bedford Stuyvesant, Brooklyn, Mr. Parrish, in addition to being on the GMAD Board

of Directors, has appeared in Off Broadway plays including "Mama, I Want to Sing" and currently works as a substance abuse and AIDS education counselor in New York City's homeless shelters.

The show features clips from videos released by GMAD which target a safe sex message to the black gay community and explore the difficulties for black men to "come out" gay in a society that is both homophobic and racist. Says Parrish, "A lot of people talk about the issues of gay

people as what goes on in the bedroom, but our issues reach far deeper. We try to focus on issues of empowerment."

Fulani, Newman and Parrish also talk about the relationship between African American gay people to the mostly white movement, as well as the failure of many elected officials and leaders in the African American community to address the issues of black gay people.

Fulani is seen every week on public access cable in 27 cities throughout the United States.

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