

Editorial...

Take Charge of Your Health!

As we attempt to survive the insensitive, elitist economic policies of the Reagan Administration, a clear picture has been painted for us. The picture tells us that we can no longer rely on the Federal Government to address the desperate needs of the poor and nuevo poor (formerly thought to be middle-class).

It is obvious that Washington's power brokers have elected to take the "ostrich" approach when it comes to the economic problems faced by an ever increasing number of Americans — both Black and White. Reagan's supply-siders' "logic" is that if we stop spending money on the needs of those in need, then business will make more money and hire more people, the rate of inflation will drop and other assorted predictions.

Through the charm of Mr. Hollywood, a callous, selfish attitude now permeates America. This attitude says "If you've got it, flaunt it...If you don't, too bad."

Facing the realities of the day, many people have begun to assume greater responsibility for their own well-being. As we move to take charge of our lives on many levels, so we must take charge of our health care needs.

At present, the health care industry is experiencing rapidly escalating costs with no leveling off in sight. As a result, professional health care organizations nation-wide are calling for consumers and third party insurers to join in a common effort to maintain quality health care while slowing down the nation's alarming medical cost spiral, now growing faster than the rate of inflation. That responsibility is even more pronounced as a greater number of people are forgoing visits to their doctors as they are unable to pay for the treatment they need.

Clearly, alternatives to the hospital are needed, especially considering the fact that today, Americans as a whole and Black Americans in particular, are experiencing more health-related crises than ever before.

To underscore the urgency of alleviating our health problems, examine the subject of heart disease. National research statistics show that 10% more Black males than White males and 40% more Black females than

White females die each year from cardiovascular disease.

If you are wondering why the death rate for Black females has escalated, further research shows that as more and more Black women move into the work world their incidence of stress related ailments increases rapidly.

Although, for women in general, the incidence of heart disease stands at only 7.9% vis-a-vis 15.3% for men, in the case of working women, the rate of heart disease is now 21.3%.

Specifically, this high risk group is comprised of women in clerical positions with children. They may be single parents or have spouses with blue collar jobs. What this data tells us is that Black Women with children who are forced, through economic pressures, to work are severely victimized by an increased coronary heart disease risk.

A major national organization recently surveyed 960 female clerical workers. Of the total respondents, 27% described their jobs as very stressful and just under half felt their jobs were somewhat stressful. In exploring stress causes, lack of promotion or raises ranked number one, while low pay ran a close second.

Considering that economic factors headed the stress-cause list and that 35% of all working women in this country fall into the usually low paying clerical category, society has got to start paying more attention to the health needs of these women.

Given the dire health emergency that we find ourselves in, we cannot afford to simply wait for a national health care momentum to build. As the saying goes, "God helps those who help themselves," so we must educate ourselves to the existing ways of minimizing our ills.

National Scene has consistently demonstrated an active interest in the health status of Black Americans, and particularly Black Women. In keeping with this attitude we stress the following:

- ...As a preventive measure, we may have to alter our diet and include more raw vegetables along with other health foods.
- ...As plans are being made to revitalize our neighborhoods, we should demand, that as a part of the local planning and zoning laws, facilities for health care are governmentally required where density is proposed.
- ...We should further demand more training of nurses and paramedics in an effort to decentralize minor

health care from the busy and expensive hospitals to residential areas.

- An important element of this decentralization of health care should be a 24 hour "Health Hotline" through which callers may be advised on how to care for someone with a common medical problem pending the arrival of professional help.

Now, more than ever, we have the opportunity for demanding and creating for ourselves, in our own community, those basic needs which have historically eluded us. We must make those who chose to lead us undertake a greater responsibility for insuring our health care needs.

On the Cover

This month's cover is devoted to health care for the elderly. In our feature interview with Dr. William Kane of the Hartford Geriatric Project, we found that a great number of erroneous concepts exist with regard to the physical and mental well-being of our senior citizens.

The cover illustration, by Dana Simson, depicts a more positive approach to elderly care with the family, doctors, etc. being supportive and cognizant of the special needs that come with advanced years. Cover art by Dulcie Dee.

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