

**SCLC Hearings Reveal**

# People Are Dying Because They Can't Afford Insurance

By Karen Parker  
Post Staff Writer

Rev. Albert Love of the national Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) announced health care hearings in Charlotte last week "brought forth sensitivity about hospital care in Charlotte."

Charlotte is one of 11 cities where the "Healthcare for Black and Poor Americans" testimonies were held. SCLC president, Dr. Joseph Lowery, Psychiatrist Alvin Pous-saint, M.D., and executive director of National Council of Senior Citizens, Bill Hutton were the panelists.

The testimonies here as in other cities revealed people are dying or might die because they can't afford hospital insurance. One participant Lucille McNeil Chambers criticized the Medicare program. "It took me six years to get my disability, and it's very low, but I did get it. But I still don't get any Medicare," Chambers testified.

At age 63, Chambers is partially blind and has arthritis in her back and one leg. "I think as high as my medicine is, and the cost of living, that I'm eligible for Medicare to help with my medicine," she argued.

Because Chambers is a volunteer with a senior citizen group, she noted she has met others who are poor and/or elderly and can't afford the expense of medicine and medical care.

"I found one couple, the husband is 68 years old and the wife will be 60 on January 1. She is a diabetic, has high blood pressure, and heart trouble," Chambers revealed. The couple receives a monthly income provided by Social Security of \$300.

According to Chambers the money is stretched to pay for food, clothing, rent, and medical expenses. "Her medicine bill runs from \$80-\$90 a month," Chambers informed with concern.

Since the couple can't afford the medicine each month, they have gone to crisis assistance agencies for financial aid. However, those agencies can only help a client once because they have a large demand to meet.

"We were able to get someone to fill her prescriptions for March, April,

May and June. She's not able to find anyone else to get her medicine for her," stated Chambers.

The couple which Chambers talked about receives \$20 monthly in food stamps. Being on a special diet, Chambers emphasized, her friends are having a difficult time living on "yellow cornbread, some butter, honey and cheese."

"I find that a lot of people are suffering; they are dying for the want of attention of medical care," Chambers added. The incident which she described is true-to-life across the country according to SCLC officials.

It's not only true of elderly citizens; but anyone who can't afford to buy medicine and are being denied financed medical assistance.

An Associated Press report revealed Laurie Ann Oiler, 21, died after going 10 days without a life-saving drug, because she couldn't afford to buy it. "This death was caused by cost containment," stated Peter DeSimone, executive secretary of the Missouri Association for Social Welfare.

The federal government removed the drug from among those which Medicaid could finance in order to curb rising Medicaid costs, according to De-

Simone. The drug which the victim used cost about \$10 for eight pills which had to be taken daily.

Once SCLC has gathered testimonies from cities scattered across the country, the information will be published and presented at the Democratic and Republican conventions.

Whatever the vagaries of the voting public, we are serving notice on this Administration or whichever one may be sitting there on Pennsylvania Avenue at this time next year, failure to address the crisis in health for poor Americans will be met with massive resistance. The right to adequate health care is a sacred right—as is the right to vote."



Pictured above left to right: Dr. Joseph Lowery, local SCLC member Pearl Robinson, Daisy Alexander, and

SCLC administrator, Rev. Albert Love attended the local hearings in Charlotte.

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## Beaux Arts Ball Set

The fourth annual Beaux Ball, sponsored by the Visual Arts Coalition, will be held Friday, June 1, at Park Center, from 8 p.m. until 1. Inspired by the costume ball which were popular at the turn of the century, the Beaux Arts is an evening of music and merriment put on by artists for the enjoyment and revelry of the community.

The Spongetones, a popular Charlotte quartet that specializes in Beatle-era music, will perform, accompanied by a laser light show by Robert Riggsbee and Lee Fleischer. As in the past, actual court judges from Charlotte will award prizes for costumes. Emcees for the evening will be Groucho Marks and Carol Wayne, courtesy of Charlotte personalities Roger Durrett and Lynne Bradley.

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