

Point of View

To Be Equal

THE HEALTH CARE CRISIS

By John E. Jacob

If you read the papers, the growing health care crisis is one of finances — runaway medical care costs take a fast-growing share of the nation's resources. The federal government foots almost a third of the nation's \$300 billion health bill and the impact on the

care for all.

That's not to ignore the importance of getting the nation's medical bill under control. But to limit debate on health policy to costs is to ignore the more urgent question of keeping our people healthy.

There is not necessarily a conflict between the two goals. Costs can

over time. The federal Medicare program covers health care costs of the elderly while the state-run Medicaid program is supposed to insure the poor and those who would be poor with-

ment plans and by federal belt-tightening, as states make their Medicaid programs more restrictive and as new user fees are instituted.

By raising fees and restricting eligibility, costs are kept under control — but only by squeezing more people into the no-man's land of denial of access to medical services.

The bulk of the federal health dollar goes to hospitals and nursing homes, but greater emphasis on primary care could be the key to long-term cost containment. That's because keeping people healthy is cheaper and easier than curing them when they are sick.

There is now renewed interest in health maintenance organizations and similar departures from the traditional fee-for-service approach that adds so much to the nation's health bill.

Such changes in the organization of health services, including greater reliance on neighborhood health clinics, make more sense than the present setup in which the local hospital emergency ward serves as the primary care center for the medically underserved.

We don't hear anything about national health insurance any more. That once-popular idea was buried by the swing to conservatism of recent years and by the massive rise in health care expenditures.

With the budget deficit around \$200 billion and likely to remain high in the foreseeable future, a national health system with universal coverage doesn't seem politically possible.

Yet, it may be revived as the key to both braking total health care expenditures and to providing equal access to health care. There is nothing sacrosanct about the present system and this is a good time to consider alternatives.

be contained while at the same time equal access is ensured. But that may take a very different health care system.

The present patchwork system evolved



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out aid in paying medical bills.

Private insurers, through group insurance plans and individual contracts, cover many of the medical expenses of working people and the middle class.

But over 20 million people fall through the gap between federal and private insurance plans. Most are poor; a disproportionate number are minorities. They are effectively shut out of the system.

Despite the mounting expenses of Medicare and Medicaid that are worrying Washington, those programs are not as effective as they should be. Medicare, for example, covers less than half of the total health expenses of the elderly. And two-thirds of poor people are not covered by Medicaid.

Those that are, are subject to differing state regulations. Many states exclude two-parent families, childless couples, and single persons from Medicaid coverage. Others won't cover the medically needy — those earning a little over the poverty level.

So there is a two class poverty system operating — with one group of poor people covered by Medicaid and others who are not. That system will be worsened by the various cost-contain-

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budget makes cost containment the hot issue in Washington.

But that perspective is a narrow one. The real issue should be equal access to quality health

Editorial

The part played by the Rev. Jesse Jackson in the release of Navy Lieutenant Robert O. Goodman, a prisoner held by the Syrian government, has been thoroughly discussed by many American people, the American press, and the media. There have been expressions that the actions of the Rev. Jackson did, in fact, embarrass the President of the United States and his administration, and that, even as a presidential candidate Rev. Jackson should not have interfered with ongoing negotiations by the United States Ambassador to Syria.

Expressions have also been made that the wheels of diplomacy were turning very slowly, and that what was needed was a grass roots individual with enough intelligence, personality, and finesse to secure the release of the young lieutenant. Rev. Jackson was that person who was considered to have the necessary qualifications to fill this role.

And then there were those who have questioned the Rev. Jackson's motives for going to Syria in the first place. Many of these questioners have labeled the trip as political in nature, stating that the Rev. Mr. Jackson made the trip for purely political reasons and to secure additional favorable publicity for his candidacy for President of the United States.

Then there are those who believe that his trip to Syria was religiously motivated, and that he made the trip for purely altruistic reasons.

The question has been asked as to whether the Rev. Jackson would have been willing to make the trip to Syria if Lt. Goodman were White. Some expressions were made that the Rev. Jackson would not have made the trip for the same reason had not Lt. Goodman been a Black man.

We feel that the American people are free to think what they may. The fact remains that the Rev. Jackson played an important part in securing the release of a young Black Navy Lieutenant. This release allowed him to return to his family and friends.

May God bless the Rev. Jackson for his courage and fortitude against great odds, and may Lt. Goodman, his wife, and other members of his family consider themselves thrice-blessed as a result of the Rev. Jesse Jackson's efforts.

PEOPLE, PLACES and POLITICS

By Joe Neal



What can he do that our president cannot do? This was a question asked by some of our white citizens interviewed at the Boulevard Mall a week ago, when queried by a news reporter from Channel 3, concerning Jesse Jackson's trip to Syria to have Lt. Goodman released.

By the time that this article is published, Lt. Goodman will have been released to Jackson.

The same mind which would ask the question in the first place is the same mind that has caused the death of more than 240 Marines. It is a mind which thinks of itself as being superior to all and does not allow for any judgement other than that which is appealing to its "superior mind." If the white mind could allow itself to see things differently, then it would probably understand that the Third World countries have a better relationship with Blacks in this country than they would have with whites. Jackson may not have been able to get a Lt. Goodman out of white South Africa, but in Syria or the black African countries, it is a different story. The reason is because the Third World countries are not afraid of saying that they do not have a fight with Blacks in this country, their fight is with the white man. It is because of this attitude on the part of the Third World countries that we observed three years ago that Ayatollah Khomeini of Iran released all the Black employees from the American Embassy in that country when the embassy was seized.

If this nation wants peace in the world, it cannot be the seeker of such as a white nation trying to enforce white ideals. To do this will only invite every little country in the world to challenge this country. Our approach should be one that enhances our appeal to the Third World as a nation which provides doctors, teachers and agronomists. This is how we should be known and not by our missiles, our jet plane attacks scrapping the living quarters of the Third World inhabitants.

There is a lesson to be learned in what Jesse Jackson did this week. It is a lesson for the highest office and policy makers in this country. It is a lesson which begs for a change in direction of our foreign policy. It begs for a more humanitarian viewpoint.

What can Jackson do that the president cannot do? He has interjected a more humanitarian viewpoint into the conflict in Lebanon. It is a viewpoint which could very well become the salvation of the nation and the world.

In a world that sets under a veil of nuclear destruction, I would much rather cast my lot with a humanitarian warrior. Jesse Jackson has proven that he can be a humanitarian warrior.

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