

# CHAMPAIGN COUNTY HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS NEWSLETTER:

813 N LINCOLN, URBANA, ILLINOIS 61801

JUNE 1979

## Consumer Leader Calls For Comprehensive NHI Plan

On June 18, more than 75 persons filled the Urbana Free Library Auditorium to hear national consumer leader Herbert Semmel call for a comprehensive, consumer oriented national health insurance (NHI) plan at a CCHCC community forum on the "Politics of National Health Insurance". Semmel, President of the Consumer Coalition for Health (CCH), is also Director of the Center for Law and Social Policy in Washington, D.C. and a former law professor at the University of Illinois. Semmel predicted that none of the major national health insurance (NHI) proposals has much chance of approval in the present Congress. Unfortunately only some form of catastrophic insurance has a chance of being passed because it promises coverage for extreme cases where family incomes could be wiped out by medical bills. "Catastrophic insurance would take the sting out of the present situation for some, but it falls far short of solving the present crisis in our health care system," said Semmel.

According to Semmel, 20 million Americans have no insurance coverage whatsoever and another 40-80 million have "grossly inadequate coverage". Catastrophic insurance will only help a small portion of the population that have huge medical bills. In essence, it really benefits medical providers who would be guaranteed payment, through public funds, for extremely high medical bills. A successful NHI proposal needs to go beyond guaranteeing reimbursement for providers and address the real problems of cost, quality and access.

Semmel attributed the poor prospects for NHI to the massive lobbying of the health industry. The AMA has recently been sued for 45 violations of the Federal Election Campaign Act in recent congressional elections. AMA propaganda contends that NHI will cost more, particularly in tax dollars. Semmel disagrees: "What the American public needs to remember is that consumers will always be footing the bill. We are already paying the

(Continued on Page 2.)

## Homebirth Classes Offered

In 1977, more than 125 persons attended CCHCC's first community forum on "Birth Alternatives". Since then, a local chapter of Home Oriented Maternity Experience (HOME) has been established by some of the forum participants. HOME is committed to "support and assist couples who wish to achieve the optimum experience of a safe home or home-like birth". The Champaign-Urbana chapter is offering a series of five classes designed for local persons interested in the home birth alternative. Wednesday classes are scheduled for July 11, August 8, September 12, October 10 and November 14 to address the following topics: advantages of home birth to mother and baby; parental responsibilities, procedures and equipment; emotional and psychological issues; medical considerations for a home birth; and transition to parenthood: breastfeeding and postpartum. For more information, contact Debbie Karplus at 359-9899.

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## Annual CCHCC Picnic Set For July 4th

The second annual CCHCC Potluck Picnic is set for Wednesday, July 4th, immediately after the parade (about 3:30) at Carle Park in Urbana. The picnic provides a chance to celebrate our nation's independence with those who are fighting for democracy in the health care system. Bring your family and a favorite dish. We need salads, main dishes, desserts, refreshments, and softball equipment. For more information, please call Karen Chinn at 328-2591, Margie Checkoway at 344-5727 or the CCHCC offices at 384-4070.

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## Consumers Reverse Anti-Planning Admendmentments

In May, a small block of U.S. congressmen backed by the AMA introduced a series of an anti-consumer, anti-planning amendments to the National Health Planning and Resources Development Act. The Act created a network of Health System Agencies (HSA) throughout the country and sought to control skyrocketing health costs. In some cases, HSAs have provided a vehicle for consumers to successfully organize to improve the cost, quality and accessibility of local health services. Part of their success can be attributed to the guarantee of consumer participation. The proposed amendments would have effectively eliminated this guarantee.

When these amendments were introduced, CCHCC and other leading consumer organizations joined an intensive national effort to reverse the anti-consumer proposals. This effort, masterfully coordinated by the Consumer Coalition for Health (CCH), was successful in preventing most of the amendments. Here's the latest from the Coalition:

- an amendment eliminating the requirement that HSA Boards be "broadly representative" of the population they serve was replaced by a CCH sponsored amendment which restored that guarantee;
- an amendment which tied HSA's hands by preventing them from imposing any condition "not directly related to need" was deleted;
- an attempt to prohibit institution-specific appropriateness review was also defeated through consumer efforts;
- a subcommittee amendment that would have left HEW powerless to place performance conditions on an HSA that had been fully designated was defeated.

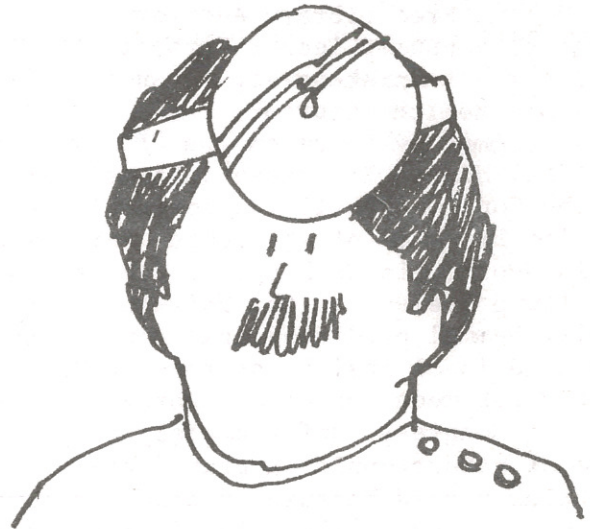
Although regressive amendments were defeated in favor of consumers, some issues - such as requiring HSA's to hire consumer advocates and requiring certificate of need for equipment for physician offices - are still in question. The Coalition is presently developing a strategy to further strengthen the health planning program. We'll keep you informed of these developments.

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(NHI Forum continued from p.1)

through 'hidden taxes' or mandatory health insurance payments deducted from our pay-checks". The increase in federal expenditures to implement NHI, often quoted by opponents, is actually a transfer of funds. "Instead of paying insurance premiums, we will be paying our health bills through taxes." Most NHI proposals include cost containment components that would help result in lower costs to consumers. Semmel called for grassroots support of a comprehensive, consumer-oriented approach to NHI.

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EXPECT RESPECT!

You are Somebody, and your dignity is as important as your health.

Medical people owe you the same respect and attention you owe them.

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## Volunteers

If you are concerned about health care issues and would like to address those concerns through action - join the Champaign County Health Care Consumers. At present CCHCC has programs dealing with consumer participation in health planning, low-income/health access issues, and consumer education. We are always looking for some extra help. Come by the CCHCC office at 813 N. Lincoln, Urbana or call 384-4070.

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## Quote/ Unquote

The following excerpts are taken from two recent letters to the News Gazette:

June 13

"In regard to the front page article in the June 2 News-Gazette, I feel that the public is being misled into believing that Mercy Hospital is adequately staffed...

Why are we frequently working double shifts and so much overtime?

Why are we told "there just isn't anyone to help you - you'll just have to make do" when someone calls in ill for an upcoming shift?

Why has one floor staff in the hospital been told there can be no vacations until after September 1 this year because the floor is so short-staffed?

Why so some patients never see a registered nurse during a shift for more than a 'hi' and 'goodbye'?

Why can't nurses find the time to sit down with the patient for a talk and some much needed emotional support?

Why must patients sometimes wait for that much needed pain medication?

Why has Mercy lost so many newly hired staff nurses after they have worked only a few weeks or months?

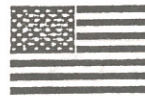
Perhaps Mercy doesn't have a nursing shortage as far as the nursing administration is concerned, but before they start telling that to the public, maybe they should check their information first hand. Perhaps they could come to the floor and assist us when we don't have the time to give every patient what he or she deserves: adequate nursing care.

I have asked to have my name withheld on this letter because I enjoy nursing and I enjoy working at Mercy Hospital."

June 26

"I read with such interest the letter from the Mercy nurse in your June 13 edition. I had been writing a letter similar to hers in regard to the same problem but with one exception - I work at Carle.

We, too, work double shifts and take our share of covering for the others...



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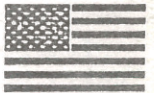
## *Come Celebrate The 4th Of July With The Health Care Consumers*

You are cordially invited to our second annual Potluck Picnic to be held on Wednesday, July 4. The picnic will begin following the parade, around 3:30-4:00 PM at Carle Park in Urbana.

*Who:* Everyone is invited.  
*What:* Potluck Picnic  
*When:* Wednesday, July 4th  
*Where:* Carle Park, Urbana

For more information please call: Margie Checkoway 344-5727  
Karen Chinn 328-2591  
CCHCC Office 384-4070

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Two of our floors have supposedly been frozen at half patient load in order to free up some help for the rest of the hospital.

Administration is begging retired R.N.s, who are doctors wives, to work even a couple of days a week. Clinic nurses are working a full clinic shift and then coming to the hospital to do the same thing...

Yes, "Mercy Nurse", you and I suffer, but are we the ones who suffer the most? No - the patient suffers when he has to wait for the desperately needed pain medication or that desperately needed time to talk with someone...

Withhold my name, please - for the same reasons "Mercy Nurse" gave. Sign me "Carle Nurse".

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CHAMPAIGN COUNTY HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS  
813 N. Lincoln  
Urbana, IL 61801

I want to join CCHCC and  
receive the CCHCC NEWSLETTER:

☐ \$1-10 membership, depending on  
your ability to pay. Please  
pay as much as you can.

My Check for \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Tel. No. \_\_\_\_\_

## Book/Plant Sale Scheduled

The Champaign County Health Care Consumers will hold a Plant/Book Sale later this summer and we need your help. To make the sale a successful fundraiser, we are asking CCHCC members and friends to donate plant cuttings or books they no longer need. Although no final dates have been set, the sale will not be held for several more weeks. This should be plenty of time to root plant cuttings (if you start now) and pick out those old books you wish to donate. Household items will also be accepted. We will begin collecting items later this month, please let us know if you can donate something by calling Loretta Morales at 344-8896.

GEMINI HOUSE/  
CHAMPAIGN COUNTY  
HEALTH CARE CONSUMERS  
813 N. Lincoln  
Urbana, IL 61801

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*Health care is too  
important a matter of  
public concern to be  
left solely to those  
who provide it.*

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