

# AMA keeps costs high, UAW leader says

While the American Medical Association talks of containing runaway medical costs, it is also supporting keeping physicians' income and other costs high and forcing patients to pay more for services, UAW President Douglas A. Fraser said recently.

A \$400,000 by AMA's National Commission on the cost of medical care reminds one of Shakespeare's warning that "words are not deeds." Fraser noted, "and the American people will judge the AMA not by its words but by its actions."

Fraser heads the committee for national health insurance, which has proposed an effective, universal and comprehensive health security program for the U.S. He listed these "talk vs. deeds" points about the AMA report:

•Unnecessary Surgery: "Doctors should not be paid for inappropriate care or unnecessary surgery," the AMA's commission advises. But when the UAW and the major auto industry employers tried to introduce a program of voluntary second surgical opinions in Michigan, the state medical society, with the blessing of

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**-UAW President Douglas Fraser**

the AMA, organized a major effort to block the activity."

#### •Vision Care:

"This year the auto industry employers and the UAW sought to achieve some of the cost containment which the AMA's commission calls for. The negotiated vision care programs required that physicians be paid the 'usual, reasonable and customary' fees if they participated in the Michigan Blue Shield plan.

"In essence this means they would not overcharge patients. Physicians who would not agree would be reimbursed at a lesser rate. However, organized medicine in Michigan and Indiana has launched a vitriolic campaign to boycott and defeat this very modest effort."

#### •Patients Pay More:

"In the face of these and other efforts in which organized medicine is

engaging to block cost containment efforts, it is ironic that its major recommendation calls for making patients 'more conscious of costs by being required to pay something out of their own pockets every time they receive care'."

"What the AMA's commission is saying is that there be no restraints on physicians' incomes but that patients should pay more."

"This is not cost containment. As the AMA's commission well knows, studies have repeatedly shown that deductibles and co-insurance do not contain costs as long as doctors are free to charge what they wish, to order expensive and often unnecessary hospitalization, laboratory and x-ray services, excessive drugs, and nursing home care in institutions which are often doctor-owned. Patients do not hospitalize themselves or order medical services; doctors do this."

#### •Prevention:

"The medical profession repeatedly urges consumers to use preventive health services and calls for early diagnosis and treatment to avoid the more serious complications of illness and injuries. There is good evidence that the commission's proposal to institute economic deterrents to prevention and early treatment is bad medicine and ultimately more costly, as the profession should know."

#### •Costs:

"In 1976, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, physicians' fees increased 131 per cent more rapidly than the overall Consumer Price Index, (11.1 per cent versus 4.8 per cent.)

"The AMA's national health insurance proposal provides no meaningful cost containment provisions. On the contrary, it would further fuel the flames of health care cost inflation by increasing the incomes of physicians, hospitals and insurance companies."

**"IT IS TIME** the American people recognized the hypocrisy of the AMA's expensive proposals," Fraser added.

## Pistons snag more critics of move plans

The Detroit Pistons basketball team's announced move from Cobo Hall to the Pontiac Silverdome Stadium has more critics.

The Wayne County Board of Commissioners' general government committee has urged the board to endorse a Detroit City Council resolution that expressed "extreme displeasure" to both the Pistons' owners and the presi-

dent of the National Basketball Association.

The resolution chides the Pistons administration for their "questionable action and total disregard for Detroit residents," and predicts "economic deprivation within the ranks of Cobo Hall employees" because of the change.

The resolution also states that Piston

management used bad judgment and poor timing to move the team from Detroit "at a time when the downtown area is experiencing a continuing revitalization."

It also criticizes the Pistons for moving despite loyal Detroit fans who have "consistently supported the franchise in relation to the quality of team performance."

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