

National News

Medical Editor Warns Of Health Profiteering

In a *New York Times* op-ed Oct. 13, Marcia Angell, former editor-in-chief of the *New England Journal of Medicine* and a lecturer at Harvard Medical School, charged that waste and profiteering are destroying the nation's health-care system.

In "The Forgotten Domestic Crisis," Angell showed how health-care funds are diverted to overhead and profit: Private insurers skim 25% off the top of premiums for administrative costs, marketing and profits; then the remainder goes through insurance brokers, lawyers, consultants, billing agencies, etc.; all of which take a cut, so that as much as half the health-care dollar never reaches the doctors and hospitals—who themselves face high overhead costs in dealing with multiple insurers.

Angell advocates creation of a national, single-payer system, which would be tantamount to expanding Medicare to the entire population. She says that Medicare is by far the most efficient part of our health system, with its overhead costs being less than 3%, while it covers virtually everyone over the age of 65.

Va., Md. Fail To Spray, Despite Malaria

A fourth location of pools of malaria-infected mosquitoes was found Oct. 8, in the Northern Virginia area where two teenagers contracted malaria in July. Two pools of malaria-infected mosquitoes were found on Selden Island, Maryland in the Potomac River, just off the shore from Virginia. Farm laborers, who work from pre-dawn to dusk on Selden Island, and have been exposed constantly to multiple bites by the anopheline mosquitoes which can carry malaria, were being tested during the following week, after the pools were discovered.

Yet Maryland and Virginia have failed, over months, to spray the adult mosquito populations. Health officials of neighboring Loudoun County, Virginia and Montgomery

County, Maryland had finally planned an aerial spraying campaign in October because, as Lynn Frank, chief of Montgomery public health services, said, "Once this thing takes hold, it's very hard to get rid of it."

But some officials in both states claimed spraying wasn't necessary, or that it would just "spread chemicals" in the effort to get rid of all the mosquitoes, which isn't "practical." Finally on Oct. 15, Maryland officials said no spraying would take place; after waiting through the Summer months, the weather had become too cold and wet in October, and the mosquitoes had ceased flying in large numbers and begun hibernating in drains and similar places. Decisions on spraying are now postponed until the Spring.

West Nile virus, meanwhile, had claimed 160 lives (including a Loudoun woman) and sickened 3,000 people nationally by Oct. 15, according to the Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

U.S. Infrastructure Portside 'Cracking'

International Longshore and Warehouse Union national spokesman Steve Stallone attributed the continued log-jam in the 29 West Coast ports which were reopened by Taft-Hartley injunction on Oct. 8, to the fact that "the infrastructure is cracking," and pointed to the the lack of train cars and the shortage of truck chassis which are keeping the ports clogged and are creating a "logistical nightmare" for workers.

"You can take the containers off the ships, but you can't get them out of the ports," Stallone said. His comments were a rejoinder to accusations from the Pacific Maritime Association (PMA), that the union may be engaging in a work slow-down in defiance of the Taft-Hartley injunction. Democratic Party Presidential pre-candidate Lyndon LaRouche's campaign pamphlet, "November Program To Rebuild the Economy," with its emphasis on the need for a massive immediate expansion of the nation's rail system, is widely circulating among ILWU officials and members. In an August speech in Los Angeles, LaRouche had pointed to the infrastructure problem of the import-dependent U.S. economy, saying

"you can import the goods, but how do you move them from the ports?" (The transcript appears in *EIR*, Sept. 6, 2002.)

The ILWU has also accused the PMA of a long-term policy of refusing to train and hire the skilled labor force to adequately man the ports, trying instead to keep the costs of wages and benefits down. On Oct. 15, in a dramatic move, ILWU Local 13, which mans the Los Angeles and Long Beach ports, filed an official complaint with the labor relations panel established by the ILWU and PMA to look into such disputes. The union charged that management was sabotaging the operations of the docks, and strategically orchestrating a crisis by refusing to put enough available workers on the docks to efficiently handle the cargo containers.

There had been some press reports that the PMA might charge the Union with violation of the Taft-Hartley court injunction obtained by President Bush; but no such charge had materialized by Oct. 16.

Ad: Osama 'Wants You To Invade Iraq'

Two full-page advertisements against a war on Iraq were run in the *New York Times* on Oct. 14.

• TomPaine.com ran an ad mimicking the old "Uncle Sam Wants You" poster, but instead showing Osama bin Laden saying: "I Want You To Invade Iraq." Its text said, "Send me a new generation of recruits. Your bombs will fuel hatred of America. . . . Distract yourself from fighting Al Qaeda. Destabilize the region. . . . So please—invade Iraq. Make my day."

• "Business Leaders for Sensible Priorities" ran an ad with pictures of Rumsfeld, Bush, and Cheney, headlined: "They're Selling War. We're Not Buying." The text read: "The President's men have compared their war on Iraq to a new product. They've timed it 'from a marketing point of view'. . . . But their product is a deadly distraction with nasty side effects. Speaking as seasoned business people, we want to see warnings on the label." The ad then featured such warnings as: "War Will Wreck Economy," "War Will Breed Terrorism," etc.