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Letters to the Editor

Nixon on Health: A 'Judo Chop' for Seniors

To the Editor:

The Feb. 6 issue of The Congressional Record contained the complete text of President Nixon's message to Congress on the National Health Insurance program.

Frankly, I was heartsick when I read that part of the message concerning Medicare applicable to folks over 65. For quick reference, I outline below the Medicare section of the President's message.

"Any person 65 or over, eligible to receive Medicare payments, would ordinarily, under my modified Medicare plan, pay the first \$100 for care received during the year, and the first \$50 toward out-patient drugs. He or she would also pay 20 per cent of any bills above the deductible limit. But in no case would any Medicare beneficiary have to pay more than \$750 in out-of-pocket costs. The premiums and cost sharing for those with low incomes would be reduced, with public funds making up the difference."

Permit me to outline a specific example as to how the foregoing would work. A retiree (over 65) covered by Medicare is hospitalized. He runs up a bill for \$3,350, toward which he pays the first \$100, reducing the bill to

\$3,250.00. Now 20 per cent of \$3,250.00 is \$650, which under the Nixon plan is what the retiree would pay. In addition, he or she would pay the \$100 deductible, making a total of \$750 in all.

To simplify, let me say, should an individual run up a hospital bill for \$3,350.00 a year, he would have to take \$63 a month from his Social Security check to pay the bill. What he will live on boggles the mind.

At every turn we see how the immense harrow of galloping inflation has undercut consumer buying power. Doesn't the Nixon Administration realize that senior citizens are trapped in a rising price crunch, higher food prices at the grocery store, similar increases in gasoline, home heating oil, etc.? A proposal in the event of lengthy hospitalization to increase the expense from the current \$84 to \$750 is simply outrageous.

The real tragedy of the foregoing is that of 28 million Social Security recipients, less than a few hundred know the judo chop the Nixon Administration is preparing to hand them.

GERARD J. ROCK
Rockville, Conn., Feb. 22, 1974