

From the Archives: Doctors and Medicare

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Last week Dr. William H. Barney, President-elect and Public Relations Chairman of the Lynchburg Academy of Medicine, addressed a local civic group. He urged all Lynchburg physicians to comply with the medicare law. He gave for his reason that, "I have never subscribed to the theory of disobedience to the law, for the sake of conscience alone."

This is arrant nonsense and a gross distortion of fact.

The medicare law which was enacted by President Johnson's puppets in Congress is entirely voluntary, as far as doctors and patients are concerned.

We repeat, medicare does not compel the participation by either doctors or their patients.

Doctors have an absolute right to participate in the medicare program, as they determine within their sole discretion. If they do choose to participate, then they elect socialized medicine for their medical practice. Or, they may refuse to participate and strike a blow for freedom, as is also their right.

All individuals over 65, who come within the provisions of the medicare law, have the right to choose to participate in the benefits provided under the law. If they decide to participate, then they become freeloaders; they elect to receive benefits from a program for which they have paid absolutely nothing and, thus, participate in the something-for-nothing philosophy which now permeates American life. They have an equal right to assert their individual initiative and responsibility and refuse the handout.

The compulsion in the medicare law is directed solely at those who will pay the freight. The workers and their employers will pay the cost of the medicare program through a drastic increase in their Social Security income taxes. For example, a working man earning \$6,600 a year will pay a Social Security income tax of \$174 during 1965. Next year, 1966, his tax leaps to \$277.20. His tax will continue to increase further under the present law, at least until 1987. And every year, his employer will have to match these payments.

The most insidious feature of this compulsion is the fact that the working man and his employer will not be putting Social Security

income tax money aside for the old age of the working man but, instead, will be paying for a medical program in respect to strangers, who never contributed one dime. When the working man reaches 65, all he can hope for is that there is someone else around earning through labor who will pay his freight.

The American Medical Association, as a group, has straddled the fence on this issue but some of its leaders, including its president, have asked doctors to cooperate with medicare. Last week, the Association of American Physicians and Surgeons roundly condemned the AMA and some of its officers and urged its members to follow a policy of complete non-participation in the medicare program. The president of this latter organization pointed out the obvious, that doctors have an absolute right to refuse to participate, as "there is no law to violate."

While the medicare program is presently entirely voluntary, except for the taxpayers, the Congress will expand the program in succeeding years, as pointed out by Russell Kirk in a column on this editorial page last week.

Since the country is rapidly abandoning all aspects of its republican form of government and is becoming a Socialist nation, it is reasonable to expect that, before too many years have passed, the medicare program will be compulsory in respect to doctors and patients. There is no doubt that this time of compulsion will be accelerated by any voluntary participation by the medical profession.

As emphasized by Dr. Kirk, doctors, of all people, should be familiar with the fact that socialized medicine has been bad medicine wherever it has been tried in the world. In those nations which have indulged in this Socialist experiment, the socialized medicine program has invariably become bankrupt, costs have spiraled, the tax load has risen tremendously, and the traditional personal relationship between doctor and patient has been destroyed. Without exception, the Socialist visionaries have underestimated many fold the costs of such programs.

Those who cherish liberty are bitterly disappointed that the medical profession, which fought socialized medicine so strongly for so many years, has now abjectly capitulated, as evidence by spokesmen for the American Medical Association and the Lynchburg Academy of Medicine.