

Care for All Urged
by David R. Toussaint
August 5, 2001
The Sunday Sun

Gathering Touts Benefits of Universal Health Care

About 25 people sat around tables Saturday afternoon at the Salvation Army building on 13th Street, talking and reading about a plan to nationalize health care and make it accessible to everyone.

The event was titled "Three Days of Global Action: Poverty is Unnecessary," and sponsored by the Poor People's Economic Human Rights Campaign, an umbrella group for the Green Party of Merced, Welfare Action, the Labor Party Just Health Care Support Committee and the Women's Economic Agenda Project.

The goal for the day was to educate people about a national health-care plan, promoted by a grassroots campaign, that would "put people, not profits, first," and provide health care for the estimated 45 million Americans who have no such service, said Ethel Long-Scott, Executive Director of Women's Economic Agenda Project.

"President Clinton tried to do it from the top down. We're trying to do it from the bottom up," Long-Scott said. The proposed plan would provide health care to every American as a right, not a benefit, and would cost less than the current system by removing the profit motive, according to supporters.

"I know it sounds like pie in the sky, but this plan would really work," Long-Scott said.

According to literature distributed at the meeting, 30 cents of every health-care dollar spent in the United States goes to CEO salaries, shareholder profits, advertising or administration for health-care companies.

The plan proposes to do away with these expenses and tax U.S. citizens who make over \$183,000 annually to help pay for health care for all Americans.

In Merced County, 22 percent of the population does not have health-care insurance, and 30 percent of people under the age of 18 live in poverty, according to Gloria Sandoval, an organizer of the event.

The plan also proposes three years of retraining and benefits for the estimated 1.25 million health care workers who would be displaced by the transition to universal health care and the elimination of more than 1,000 health insurance companies.

Because the \$1.2 trillion spent annually on health care in the U.S. - an average of \$4,443 per person - is not spent wisely, employers would actually save money under the plan, according to literature from the Labor Party.

The average family's annual out-of-pocket expenses for health care - including co-payments - was \$1,841, according to Labor Party literature.

The "Three Days of Global Action" continues today with more information sessions and a barbecue between 1 and 5 p.m. The Salvation Army building is in Stephen Leonard Park at T and 5th streets.