

Back off, 'greedy geezers'

EDITOR, GAZETTE:

Mr. Lawrence Smedley of the National Council of Senior Citizens is a good representative of the greedy geezers of this country ("Let's do something about health care," April 29).

Mr. Smedley wants the best for senior citizens and cites the high cost of medical care and the rules governing long health term care in nursing homes. He states that "long term health care should be provided through eligibility based on one's physical or mental condition — not on age or income. Financing of this new entitlement should be broad based and not burdensome to the poor. Since the program would be intergenerational, its financing would be a shared burden."

Who would most use this new entitlement? He says it would not be based on age, but what age group actually makes up the largest percentage in nursing homes? This is a very honorable idea, however the means of paying for this is really being very greedy of the senior citizens.

Take for example myself. I contribute to medicare over \$1,100 per year out of my wage and benefit package. My family's health insurance costs me \$865.92 per year. Senior citizens are charged a very small sum of \$348 per year and if they can not afford it then medicaid will pay it for them. I pay more for senior citizen health care than I do for my own family. I pay over three times more than the greedy old seniors do themselves.

Senior citizens had the chance for improved health coverage, but lobbied congress to repeal the surcharge because they did not want to pay for it. Now the greedy seniors want the workers and everyone else to pay for their care. Well I am tired of it. Social Security taxes have risen almost 13,000 percent since 1937. Inflation has just been over 780 percent since 1937. Social Security benefits have out stripped inflation by 49 percent.

Real wages have dropped 10 percent behind inflation over the past 10 years. Wages are projected to drop approximately 1 percent per year for the next 15 to 20 years. This drop in real income is attributed to the high cost of capital which leads to low investment growth which ultimately effects the productivity of this country and wages.

Senior citizens say they are on fixed incomes. Well every worker knows very well that his raise does not keep pace with inflation. However, every retired senior gets a cost of living adjustment equal to inflation. If seniors are on fixed incomes then the majority of workers are on decreasing incomes. Just last January we all started paying more in gasoline taxes, liquor taxes, cigarette taxes and airline taxes. All these increases in taxes had an effect on inflation.

Guess what? Inflation surged the first month of the year. Taking this a step further Retirees will be getting it all back next year when they get their COLA allocation. So who really helped pay to reduce the deficit and paid the taxes? Senior's get discounts at theaters, restaurants, on prescriptions, hotels, airline tickets, state income tax credits, property tax credits, larger standard deduction on federal income tax, and many more based solely on age. All these subsidies are passed along to the younger generation in the form of higher taxes or higher prices.

Don't you think that we have been generous enough? How about repaying some of this generosity with a real cut in social security benefits, eliminating COLA for a few years. These cuts would make it possible to cut the FICA tax. It would help workers pay for their children's college, pay for homes, provide investment money for future generations and much more.

In the age of \$300 billion deficits would it not be more prudent to cut entitlement programs in order to cut the deficit versus adding another entitlement program that will only increase the deficit? We as a country just can not afford another give away program. We are by not means the richest country on the earth.

Sincerely,

William R. Larsen
Sterling