

SENATOR HIGGINS: Mr. President, Senators, I am pretty ignorant on the certificate of need bill and whenever something comes up that I am not familiar with I usually try to go to an expert and pick their brain. In this case I have been this summer talking with three different doctors, one an internist, one a GP and one an orthopedic man. All three of them told me, if you don't have a certificate of need bill, Marge, you will eventually sell your house and everything you own to afford either the insurance to go to the hospital or to pay the hospital bill. One of the things that upsets me is one hospital in Omaha this year purchased a helicopter and their cost is \$365 an hour. Four other hospitals went together and they purchased a helicopter. Their cost they told me is \$500 an hour, and incidentally they service more people out in the western part of the state than the other hospital. I don't why \$125 an hour difference in this, and I don't why when the first hospital was only using their helicopter 40 percent of the time, the other hospitals didn't go to them and say, let's utilize this more and cut the cost down per patient. It would seem to me as if there is a battle on who is going to get the most patients. I was appalled when I read in the World Herald that one of our hospitals, nonprofit, was building a car wash, and their excuse was to attract employees. I talked to an architect friend of mine who works with hospitals and he said, hogwash, Marge, he says for years back east the hospitals have been building garages to attract doctors because that is where the bucks are. Doctors drive in back east and while they are making their hospital visits they get their car washed and greased, the oil changed, everything except major body work. It isn't to attract staff. It is to attract doctors. But who is going to pay for that? Eventually the patients. I think that since hospitalization is something that all of us may one day have to have, if for no other reason than just to go in and be tested and find out what an ailment is, I don't think it is unreasonable, Senators, if we do give further thought and deliberation to this and send at least the amendments back to committee for a public hearing, and I don't like to sit there and listen to this. I certainly have got my fill of public hearings, and I am sympathetic to Senator Sieck. Before I was elected, one of the hospitals invited me to lunch, Senator Sieck, and they wanted to sit down and talk to me about certificate of need and they said the very same thing. They said to me, Marge, if our boiler breaks up and we want to buy a new one, we have got to get permission from the federal government. And I said, why? That's how ignorant I was. And they said, well, if we don't get permission from the federal government, we can't take in Medicare patients. We have to go that route. And I said, why don't you just not take Medicare patients?