

Bellin Scores Health Proposal For Independent Planning Unit

By DAVID BIRD

Dr. Lowell E. Bellin, the city's Health Commissioner, attacked yesterday a proposal calling for an independent non-government organization to plan the city's health care as "a consummate ploy that masquerades as consumer representation but in fact sabotages consumer representation."

Dr. Bellin said the new Health Systems Agency, required by Federal legislation to make sure the sharply increasing governmental expenditures are spent wisely, should be "a public agency with public accountability."

"We do not ordinarily assign urban planning to the control of real estate interests," he said.

The Health Commissioner spoke at a meeting called by the Committee for an Independent Health Systems Agency for New York City, a group led by health providers such as doctors and voluntary non-profit hospitals. The session was held at the City University Graduate Center, 33 West 42d Street.

Committee members say that health decisions — such as where new hospitals should be built — should not be decided solely by the government.

Government Input Wanted

"We want government input but not government dictatorship," said Dr. Benjamin W. Watkins, a podiatrist who is acting secretary of the committee. Dr. Watkins said an independent group would be a "smooth-running agency free of government hassles."

Joseph V. Terenzio, president of the United Hospital Fund and a leader of the committee, said its aim was to make health planning "a cooperative effort on the part of consumers, providers and government with no one segment dominating."

John V. Connorton, the executive vice president of the Greater New York Hospital Association, which represents voluntary institutions said he doubted the ability of the city government to take on the task.

"It seems to us to make little sense to entrust so vital

an undertaking," he said, "to the supervision of an administration already beset with problems of such monstrous proportions."

According to the legislation, New York City and some 200 regions around the country must submit by Jan. 16 a plan for a Health Systems Agency to replace all other health planning agencies that have been set up in the past.

Duplication of Facilities

The current planning agencies have not been able to guide the development of health facilities, Federal officials have said, with the result that there has been expensive duplication of facilities as well as an excess of hospital beds in the city. The new agency is to have the power to prevent such wasteful practices and there has been a growing battle between those who favor municipal control and those who favor private control over which sector will be dominant.

Several plans for a new Health Systems agency are expected to be submitted to the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare who is to make the final decision. If none of the plans is acceptable to the Secretary, he is empowered to impose his own plan.

Carter Burden, chairman of the City Council's Committee on Health, said he opposed the plan for an independent agency "because of its inequitable tilt toward health-provider interests."

Speaking as executive director of the Hospital and Medical Care Committee of the New York City Central Labor Council, Donald Rubin also attacked the make-up of the proposed independent agency. He said the Labor Council, representing 500 local unions with 1.2 million members, "is allocated one or two seats on the proposed Board of Governors."

"On the other hand," he said, "the medical societies are allocated six seats; the dental societies three, the various nursing associations five and the Greater New York Hospital Association four."