

Sparks: \$3 million essential

By Ron Wylie

The University of Nebraska Medical Center (UNMC) took its turn in front of the Unicameral's Appropriations Committee Wednesday in the third day of university budget hearings.

UNMC Chancellor Robert Sparks asked legislators to provide more than \$2,000,000 for general hospital expenditures and another \$1,000,000 for new equipment and renovations.

Sparks said the center served as a critical laboratory for Nebraska and provided the same high-quality medical care

as any hospital its size.

Along with its learning program and its experimentation in new types of treatment, Sparks said the medical center provided a valuable community service by taking patients with little or no money. The UNMC was a last resort for many, he said.

Good quality

"We're talking about running a good quality hospital as well as an institution of learning here," Sparks said. "People depend on us, and if we're not adequately funded, I don't know what those people

are going to do."

Declaring that the equipment and renovation request was a non-recurring expense, Sparks said the budget items were essential for maintaining a modern hospital.

The legislative fiscal analyst staff recommended \$250,000 for UNMC's general hospital fund, ten percent of the amount requested by the administrators. Staff members told Sparks that state taxes should aid the center only with items which could not be financed by hospital fees.

Low-income

Sparks countered the staff proposal with illustrations of medical center help to low-income families in the Omaha area.

"UNMC accepts patients, and we know they aren't going to be able to pay from the day they arrive," Sparks said, adding that the center also made special agreements with state agencies to provide services beyond a person's ability to pay.

Sidney Sen. Robert Clark questioned Sparks' system of bill collection. "You don't pursue collections with diligence," he said, "because you know you can turn to the state legislature to help you out."

Program threatened

UNMC's Continuing Education in Nursing program is also threatened by budget cuts, and Sparks asked for restoration of funds for continued expansion of the center's program in nursing and pharmacy.

Sparks said a projected 48 per cent expansion was needed over the next five years.

Appealing for full funding for UNMC's programs, Sparks said, "We have 43 services we offer right now, and if we're not adequately funded, we will have to cut back on our services."

Thursday, the last day of Appropriations hearings on university budgets, the legislators will hear testimony on funding for the State University of Nebraska (SUN), computer services, and data systems.



Thomas Wolfe, author and journalist

Wolfe: basic drive is status-seeking

Status-seeking is the most basic drive in every individual, Tom Wolfe, author and journalist, said in an interview Wednesday.

The results of this status-seeking include class conflict, violence and the current rash of hostage-taking crimes, he said.

Class and status resentment exist in the lower class, according to Wolfe, because the lower class wants something it doesn't have, and the upper class has it.

The only result of this conflict is a form of ceremonial, symbolic violence, he said, which is not intended to seize power, but is a highly elaborate form of "thumbing their noses" at the upper class.

Opening a Symposium on the Future sponsored by the Union Program Council, Wolfe earlier spoke to an overflow crowd in the Union Ballroom on "Class Conflict and Violence in America's Future."

In his speech, Wolfe said that young people are becoming more and more intensely aware of class conflict, but less and less willing to admit it.

According to Wolfe, there is pressure among students to act as if there is no difference between them and the working class, but he said this attempt "comes across as very phony."

He said there may be no way to ever bridge the class gap because it may be an inevitable part of society.

The same status-seeking which leads to class violence also leads to hostage-taking as "the Perfect Crime of the 1970's," Wolfe said.

He said that fame is more important than money today, because it is proof of status and importance. It is the publicity the hostage-taker wants, and, according to Wolfe, it is the publicity which gives him the power to have his demands met.

Wolfe, who said he has called himself a journalist ever since a biography he wrote came back from the publisher reading "author; journalist," is a member of a growing profession referred to as "new journalism."

New journalism is a development in which writers of non-fiction use every effective device known to prose fiction while still observing standards of accuracy, according to Wolfe.

Until recently, made-up stories were the only source for people to get certain sides of life, he said, particularly the psychological and social sides.

With the advent of the non-fiction novel, he said, they not only see those sides of life, but they have the additional knowledge that the scenes, dialogue and characters are real.



Photo by Kevin Higley

Dr. Robert Sparks, chancellor of the University of Nebraska Medical Center

UNMC chancellor put on spot at Unicameral

Dr. Robert Sparks, University of Nebraska Medical Center chancellor, may have discovered Wednesday how difficult it is to make a presentation before the Nebraska Unicameral's Appropriations Committee.

Committee members took nothing Sparks said for granted, constantly asking for exact percentages and figures, sometimes ignoring Sparks' earlier mention of them.

Lincoln Sen. Shirley Marsh questioned the discounts allowed staff members on medical bills at UNMC. Sparks said the discounting method is similar to those used at many hospitals.

Sparks said funds are needed because of the high number of nonpayment cases incurred by UNMC. Sen. Robert Clark of Sidney reminded Sparks that all hospitals have nonpayment cases, ignoring Sparks' statement that UNMC has a greater percentage of non-payment cases than the average hospital.

Sen. John Savage of Omaha said he hoped UNMC would get additional requested funds, but he said he couldn't predict the likelihood of approval until the committee meets in executive session.

Salary increases and the funds they will require will be the main issue for approval or disapproval of spending hikes, Marsh said.

Committee Chairman Richard Marvel perhaps best summed up Sparks' position at the hearing. Sparks was being questioned by Marsh on a point that he had no figures on.

"You're putting me on the spot there," Sparks said.

"That's the purpose of these hearings," Marvel said.

John Dean to address Omaha audience Friday

John Dean, former counsel to Richard Nixon, will speak Friday at 8:30 p.m. in Omaha at the Civic Auditorium Music Hall. Admission for students is \$2.50 with student identification. General admission is \$4. Dean's speech is sponsored by the Student Programming Organization of the University of Nebraska at Omaha.

Cohen: social plans growing

By Mary Kay Roth

Within five years everyone in the United States will be covered under a national insurance plan, Wilbur Cohen, former Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare, said Wednesday.

A revolution in social welfare legislation is evolving out of the present recession, Cohen said, and national insurance is only a part of the new era.

Cohen spoke at a news conference and speech session in the Nebraska Union Wednesday afternoon.

He compared today with the 1930s depression, when he said the entire government-citizen relationship was changed.

In the 1930s, Cohen said, self-sustaining people admitted they needed government aid. As a result, he said, social security, welfare and private pensions were started.

In the same way, Cohen stated, people who thought they were reasonably well off five years ago are now willing to go along with increased social welfare legislation.

Cohen said the U.S. is moving toward a "human service oriented society." This new emphasis on the human quality of life, he

continued, may result in legislation such as national health insurance, social security reform, day care centers and guaranteed annual incomes.

When Medicare was approved in 1965, Cohen said, a major obstacle in health care was overcome. Those who claimed that Medicare would bring regimentation of doctors and patients were proven wrong, he said.

"Now we're down to the nitty gritty of the problem," Cohen said, "answering questions of how to finance and administer a national health care program—how to make it work."

The national health insurance bill that will be passed probably hasn't been introduced yet, because a compromise will be necessary, he said. He said more than ten bills have been introduced in Congress to deal with health insurance programs.

Cohen recommended a step-by-step approach to national health insurance, because he said it will affect so many people—four to five million in the health profession, including 7,000 physicians.

"Compared to the implications this program will make," he predicted, "D-Day on the Normandy beaches will look like a minor managerial problem."