

in the Jan. 6 *Boston Herald* calling the arrival of for-profit health care “a very troubling new development. They play hardball. They’ll do everything to take patients away from the other hospitals, and doctors away from other hospitals, and they don’t have the same sense of commitment to the community services and research and education the others have.”

Michael Miller, of Health Care for All, a consumer advocacy group opposing the takeover, issued a call in early January for a moratorium on any new conversion of non-profit hospitals until safeguards are put in place to protect the public interest. On the Columbia/HCA takeover, he is quoted in the Jan. 4 *Washington Post*: “Do we want an institution with a profit-driven philosophy in the middle of Boston with deep pockets ready to drive other institutions out of business?”

Boston has been a traditional world-class center of medical research, training, and treatment. Under the managed-care onslaught, its network of facilities and staff is being rapidly dismantled. In 1993, there were 55,000 people in Boston employed by hospitals. Today, the estimate is 40,000, because of the layoffs, mergers, and downsizing.

The situation is so critical, that Boston leaders are calling for government intervention. Boston University Professor Alan Sager warned in January, “Government has to come in, set up a structure and give it a push. Without government, you end up with cartels and monopolies. It is crazy to allow the free market to destroy our trust in the health-care system.”

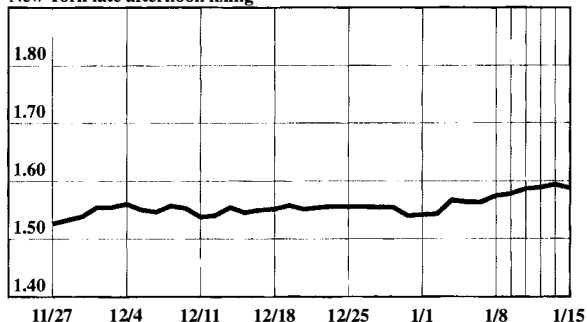
For research funding specifically, in the past, Boston and other U.S. teaching hospitals received some funding from hospital-imposed surcharges on patients’ bills; and most patients were covered under traditional insurance plans that paid hospitals for each service provided. Now, the HMOs pay cut-rate for even the bare minimum services; no money at all goes for research.

Columbia/HCA Corp., the largest U.S. operator of for-profit hospitals, is the result of the February 1994 merger of Columbia Hospital Corp. with Hospital Corp. of America (HCA). Columbia was founded in 1987 in Texas, by circles associated with the Bass family fortune (and Bush family), which proceeded to buy up hospitals, impose selected shut-downs, and monopolize the remaining services available to a community. HCA was founded in 1968, in Tennessee, by circles connected to current U.S. Sen. Thomas Frist, Jr. (R-Tenn.); by 1983, HCA owned 376 hospitals in the United States and seven other countries. By the end of 1994, Columbia/HCA had 42,357 beds; revenues in 1995 were \$17.695 billion, with profits of \$961 million, a profit margin of 5.4%. The Oct. 14, 1996 *Wall Street Journal* expressed worry about “Columbia/HCA’s desire to buy more bricks and mortar,” because “America has too many hospitals.” But, of course, Columbia/HCA specializes in buy-ups, to then create scarcity, and soak the community. To this looting, the Massachusetts moratorium backers say, “No.”

Currency Rates

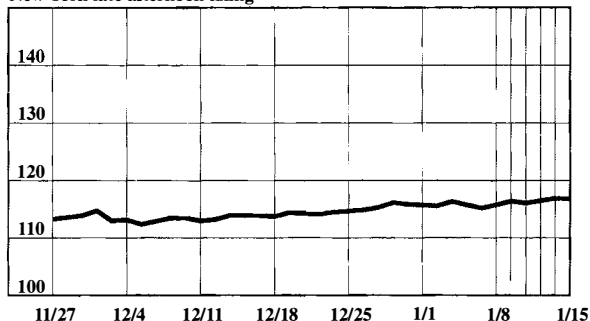
The dollar in deutschemarks

New York late afternoon fixing



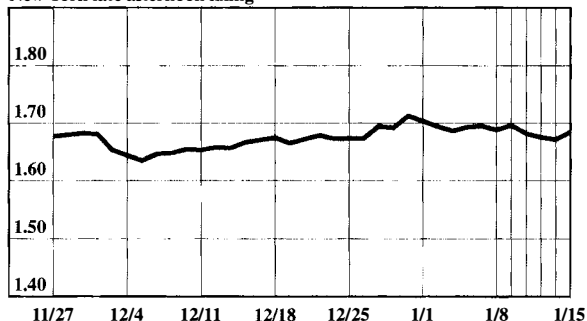
The dollar in yen

New York late afternoon fixing



The British pound in dollars

New York late afternoon fixing



The dollar in Swiss francs

New York late afternoon fixing

