

CBS targets disabled for euthanasia with Kevorkian broadcast

by Linda Everett

On Nov. 22, the CBS News program "60 Minutes" aired Jack Kevorkian's euthanasia-murder of a disabled Michigan man on prime-time television. In doing so, CBS exposed itself as a brazen protagonist for a social-Darwinist movement which is intent on exterminating the sick, elderly, and disabled in the country under the euphemism of "compassionate" "physician-assisted suicide."

The broadcast, like the movement, has nothing to do with compassion, patient autonomy, or so-called death with dignity, as proponents claim. The population, so bombarded with pervasive cultural pessimism in post-industrial America, that it blinds them to the help immediately at hand for seriously ill and disabled individuals, may accept these explanations. But, the root cause lies in the collapsed U.S. economy: Shorn of the productive industrial base needed to provide people with a decent standard of living and the country with an adequate tax base to support adequate health care, Malthusian policymakers have gained increasing influence. They, like the International Monetary Fund-dictated brutal austerity against impoverished nations today, endorse as necessary the radical contraction of our economy and the alleged need to accustom the population to it through health care rationing and "who lives, who dies?" ethics masquerading as the new "right" to die with dignity.

The state of Oregon epitomized the Malthusians' policies, with its Medicaid rationing plan which denies life-saving treatment and certain critical pain medications to indigent sick and disabled patients, but which covers "physician-assisted suicide" as palliative care!

Enter Jack "Dr. Death" Kevorkian, who lived for nine years according to his belief that, as he puts it, the "voluntary self-elimination of individual and mortally diseased or crippled lives taken collectively can only *enhance* the preservation of public health and welfare" (emphasis in original). Euthanasia proponents—from Dr. Marcia Angell of the *New England Journal of Medicine* to pro-dope speculator George Soros—claim patients have the "right" to "choose" death. Their social Darwinian ethic is indistinguishable from Hitler's: "If the power to fight for one's own health is no longer present, *the right to live in this world of struggle ends.*" CBS and "60 Minutes" legitimized that ethic for 22 million Americans who watched this made-for-TV murder, making euthanasia the solution for those whose lives our society, like Hit-

ler, decides are "not worthy of life," not worthy of our protection or nation's resources.

Murder by any name

The "60 Minutes" broadcast shows Kevorkian first questioning his victim, Thomas Youk, 52, who has Lou Gehrig's disease, or ALS (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis). Youk is then murdered on camera. Kevorkian administers a series of injections into his victim's arm, which is strapped down. Kevorkian pronounces that Youk is a "straight line," that is, dead. The murder was carried out and filmed on Sept. 22 at Youk's home in Waterford Township, Michigan. Kevorkian did not then claim Youk as his "patient." But Oakland County, Michigan's Chief Medical Coroner Dr. L.J. Dragovic, who has performed most of the autopsies on Kevorkian's victims, told *EIR* that, while the lethal drugs used in Youk's homicide had the same signature as previous Kevorkian homicides, this time the needle marks on Youk's arm were disguised with a flesh-colored marker.

The homicide occurred quietly weeks after Michigan's new law against assisted-suicide went into effect, and during the final weeks of the unsuccessful gubernatorial bid by Kevorkian's former attorney and accomplice, Geoffrey Fieger. Fieger, who championed Kevorkian's killing of disabled people as "compassion," refused to meet with any disability organization or advocates throughout his campaign. Once the election was over, Kevorkian delivered the tape to CBS, telling Mike Wallace of "60 Minutes" that the snuff film was necessary to call attention to the need for "active euthanasia," and to force prosecutors to charge him with committing euthanasia to set a legal precedent, which they did. He was charged with first degree murder, violating Michigan's ban on assisted suicides and delivery of controlled substances.

CBS claims they were just letting Kevorkian "tell his story"—which is ludicrous. The sociopathic killer carried out poison gas or lethal injection deaths of 130 people (by his own admission), as part of his campaign to make "physician-assisted suicide" legal. Some victims were manipulated to trigger their own "suicide"; others, paralyzed and physically incapable of killing themselves, were killed by Kevorkian or an accomplice. After Youk's "active euthanasia," Kevorkian said, "From now on, I'm going to do them all that way—it is faster, cleaner, and easier."

Kevorkian is unbalanced, dangerously so. But, what is CBS's excuse?

Dr. Herbert Hendin, medical director of the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, told *EIR* that the CBS broadcast was horribly biased: It never attempted to show alternatives to murder. It led individuals with ALS to believe that there are no options for them other than suffering or being killed. It never says what, if any, therapies Youk had undergone, or if his family had help or support in caring for him.

CBS has done irreparable damage to families as well: Euthanasia is presented as a socially condoned way to alleviate the burden of caring for a spouse, i.e., it's morally acceptable to set up your spouse for murder.

The ALS Association (ALSA) voiced its concern in a letter to CBS and "60 Minutes" prior to the airing, explaining that ALSA focusses on the need for hope in treating people with ALS. Wallace defended the airing, saying he wants to be "euthanized" if he becomes terminally ill. "60 Minutes" has given major promotion to every leading euthanasia killer internationally, including Derek Humphry of the Hemlock Society, Humphry's protégé Marty James, and Holland's Dr. Pieter Admiraal.

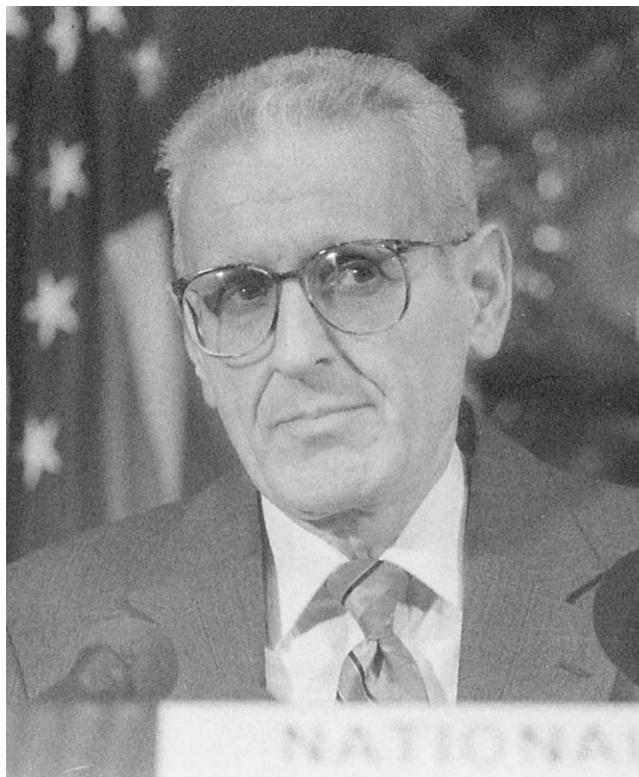
Among those opposed to the broadcast, Archbishop Cardinal James Hickey of Washington, D.C. inaugurated a letter-writing campaign to protest the program. Cardinal Anthony Bevilacqua of Philadelphia issued a personal appeal to stop the broadcast: "Life is valuable, no matter what its condition, no matter its qualities. We cannot judge a person solely by their illness or disability. . . . The victim . . . basically signed his life away on someone else's words of hopelessness."

Nevertheless, CBS aired the snuff film on the 53rd anniversary of the start of the 1945 war-crimes tribunals in Nuremberg, where the U.S. military tried, and executed, Nazi doctors for the crime of euthanasia. The murder garnered CBS's highest rating of the season.

What is ALS?

ALS is a fatal neurological disorder, characterized by progressive degeneration of motor neurons in the spinal cord and brain, making it impossible to send impulses to muscles affecting arms, legs, speech, swallowing, and breathing. The euthanasia lobby has long targetted ALS patients as the next "hard case" for legalized "physician-assisted suicide," lying outright that every patient with ALS inevitably faces a torturous death agony, terror, and pain because they "know" they will "choke to death on their own saliva." Since, they say, paralyzed ALS patients are incapable of swallowing lethal pills, someone—like Kevorkian—must administer the lethal injection.

The lies about ALS are all the more hideous, given how much can be done to ameliorate the symptoms which ALS patients experience. Dr. John Wald, director of one of 14



Serial murderer Dr. Jack Kevorkian, at the National Press Club in 1992. Now, CBS has joined his effort to euthanize the nation's sick, elderly, and disabled.

ALSA centers nationally that provide state-of-the-art multi-disciplinary care for ALS patients, and a neurologist at the University of Michigan Health System, told *EIR* that ALS is an unusual disease that takes an experienced specialist to accurately diagnose it and to integrate the numerous specialties to treat patients appropriately—all of which is difficult, if not impossible, under many health maintenance organizations (HMOs) and managed-care plans.

One-third of the 30,000 people with ALS are enrolled in managed-care plans, fee-for-service plans, or Medicare. As HMOs abandon Medicare patients, increase medication co-pays, and cut services, ALS patients can't get supplementary plans or must pay prohibitive premiums. CBS's actions are all the more reprehensible because, while these patients are trying desperately to stay alive, they and their families must fight insurers daily to do so. An insurer may cover the costs of a patient's wheelchair or motorized scooter, but then, deny coverage of a ramp into their house, forcing them to depend on someone to carry them from room to room. Lack of financial resources and being a "burden" to relatives are major factors in suicide "requests." But, as one Swedish study found, when help is given to families of sick elderly patients who were cared for at home and who had attempted suicide, the patients wanted to live—and the families wanted them to live.

ALSA set up a network of patient service coordinators in 35 chapters nationally to help patients with coverage problems (1-800-782-4747). It also provides some assistive equipment, such as wheelchairs, through its "loan closets." ALS patients, who can live five years or more after diagnosis, are forced to wait for two years in order to qualify for Social Security Disability. Passing HMO reforms, such as the Clinton administration's Patients' Bill of Rights Act, is critical; no less so is the "ALS Research, Treatment and Assistance Act," now before Congress, which waives Social Security's waiting period.

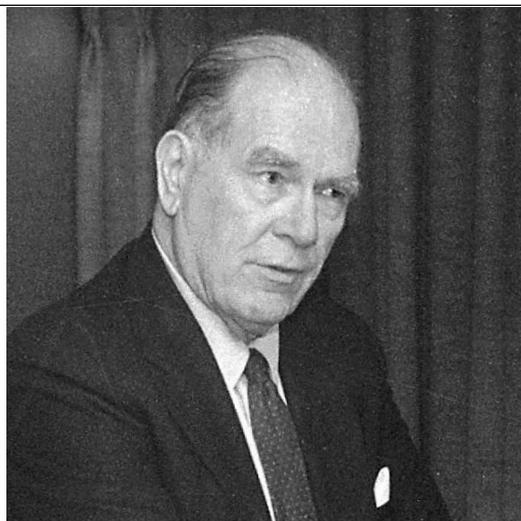
A Food and Drug Administration-approved therapy, Rilutek, slows the progress of the disease (Myotrophin and other types of therapies are also being tested). Dr. Wald explained that doctors can successfully treat most ALS symptoms, such as rapid mood shifts, depression, and respiratory failure, while speech pathology techniques improve speaking and swallowing. Pain from muscle cramping, and spasticity, are also preventable.

Whereas Kevorkian ranted that he had to kill Youk because of Youk's terror about "choking to death," ALSA finds that both family experience and the data from the ALS Care national project, "does not support that information." In fact, very few patients die this way, because a simple hand-held suction device, or a machine like that used in a dentist's office,

or medication, alleviate excess saliva and relax throat muscles.

Emaciation is also preventable among ALS patients, who often don't get enough nutrition because they eat must slowly, have poor appetites, or stop eating or drinking because of the lack of assistance to use the bathroom. But, the use of a tiny, unobtrusive stomach feeding tube actually *slows* the progress of the disease and combats muscle wasting caused by malnourishment—and still lets patients orally enjoy what food they wish. As breathing declines, external ventilators are used to provide positive pressure to expand the lungs. Ventilators and tracheotomies give further support, as do augmentative communication devices and computers for those unable to communicate. New medical research and technologies, along with adaptive or assistive devices, can vastly improve these and other patients' ability to live with disease and disability—or even defeat it—when a cure is currently lacking (see "Kevorkian's Victims Needed Medical Science, Not Suicide," *EIR*, July 7, 1995).

But, until the nation's economic capability is back on track, as per Lyndon LaRouche's New Bretton Woods proposal, we lack the critical means to support initiatives comparable to the Apollo mission to the Moon, and the transfer of its dramatic scientific technologies to medical breakthroughs that benefitted the nation thousands of times over.



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