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The Right To Kill, With Dignity?

by Murray N. Rothbard

For a long time now we have been subjected to a barrage of pro-death propaganda by Left-Liberals, and by their cheering squad, Left, or Modal, Libertarians. The "right to die," the "right to die with dignity" (whatever that means), the right to get someone to assist you in suicide, the "right to euthanasia," etc. Up till now, Left-Liberals have at least appeared to be scrupulous in stressing the crucial importance of consent by the killed victim, because *otherwise* the right to die with dignity looks very much like the right to commit murder. For what is compulsory euthanasia but murder, pure and simple?

But now the mask has begun to slip. One of the great enthusiasms of the right-to-die forces has long been the Living Will, in which the prospective candidate for euthanasia signs a form requesting his family, medical authorities, etc., to pull the plug under specified conditions. I have long been queasy about the consensual bona fides of the right-to-diers and have wondered what would happen if somebody wrote a Living Will that was spunky instead of spineless, that insistently favored his own life as against his death.

Now we know, and the answer, to say the least, is not good. Helga Wanglie, an elderly lady in Minneapolis, wrote a Living Will, but she opted for being kept alive if she lapsed into a vegetative state. Now 87, she is indeed in such a state, and her husband, respecting Helga's wishes in realizing that only while there is life can there be hope, is anxious to respect Helga's wishes and keep her alive. Note, too, that Helga's medical cost is being covered privately, by private health insurance; Helga is no burden on the taxpayer.

So what's the problem? The problem is that the medical authorities, in their wisdom, have decided that since Helga's case is hopeless, *they* should have the right to pull the plug, overriding the wishes of Helga on this issue. But what are the medical authorities, whose very profession pledges them to keep patients alive to the best of their ability, advocating here if it is not mere murder? The Minnesota doctors, having decided that Helga Wanglie is not fit to live, propose to murder her, and they, and other liberals, are sneering at the Wanglies for being backward Neanderthals in trying to affirm her life. Will somebody explain to me

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THE EAR

By Sarah Barton

A prominent libertarian coin dealer [LCD] — no, not Burt, silly — recently called up a distinguished libertarian coin dealer rater [CDR] and asked him why the CDR was not plugging his coin company.

The CDR, not a man to mince words, told the LCD: "Because you're a goddam crook, and your customers always get fleeced."

Big news on the Koch-topus front. John Blundell, the Brit who displaced Leonard Liggio as president of

the Institute for Humane Studies (IHS), has just been promoted to the plum job of head of all Kochian philanthropy. This job, held for many years by George Pearson, was then given to Richie Fink as reward for his lobbying efforts. But Fink has now moved up a notch to overall head of the entire expanding Kochian hierarchy, with Blundell underneath him as top philanthropoid. And Wayne Gable, a Finkian who succeeded

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The left-wing pro-death coalition?

tried to take it home recently, installing a beautiful Russian girl as a "guest" in his house. The missus, however, tossed the young woman out.

The LP national convention in Chicago is shaping up as even more of a lulu than I had thought.

Item: Sue Walton, head of LEI, Ltd., the outfit running the convention, admits in a memo to LP NatCom that the speakers, traditionally big names, will largely be people no one, including LPers, has ever heard of. As she says, "there will be few familiar faces among our main stream events." Great start! But we are assured that the workshops will be filled with illustrious types like Steve

Dasbach, Nick Youngers, Tonie Nathan, et al. I can hardly wait. In fact, the *only* speakers lined up by the end of April were Ron Paul, Joe Sobran, and Jack Herer (who dat?). That means that the only two recognizable speakers are paleos. Memo to Ron and Joe: Atlas, why don't you shrug, and stop giving credibility to these bozos? But if you must go, take a tip: get the check in advance, and make sure it clears, before you leave the Windy City.

Item: LEI's much heralded credit card acceptance had, by late April, "unfortunately been delayed," but Sue was hoping

for it soon.

Item: A stage and lighting guy from New York, Clay S. Conrad, obviously a savvy professional, kept urging Sue Walton and the LP to get professional lighting and design so that the LP would not look like the boobish amateurs they really are on C-Span, as they did at the 1989 convention. Conrad offered to do the whole thing at special cheap rates. But he couldn't get the time of day from Sue Walton, who, after a long runaround, finally turned him down flat. Welcome to the world of the LP, Clay Conrad, and...goodbye!

Item: But for Sue Walton, all this is OK because she has the box lunch question down pat!

I kid you not, but Sue sent no less than two memos to all NatCom officers announcing with great enthusiasm that LEI is providing Marriott box lunches to all NatCom committees at cost, that is, \$8.25 per person. She lovingly details in her memo what the box lunch will be: Tuesday, croissant sandwich, fruit, brownie, etc. Is this woman for real? Is the LP for real? Think about this: can anyone imagine a real political convention director detailing the box lunch contents to national committee biggies? Readers, donors, libertarians: why does *anyone* take this crazy party seriously? ●

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how this attitude differs from that of Nazi doctors, with their zeal to exterminate people whose lives they considered unfit?

The right to kill seems to be the established medical position. Thus, Minnesota "medical ethicist" Dr. Steven Miles: "We are certain this person cannot change from her present condition. Shouldn't we be making sure that we're responsible in allocating the resources...to keep costs down for everybody?" Notice the paramount consideration given to the collective "we," with individuals not allowed to decide their own costs, and with the Doctor, long professionally accustomed to playing God, now playing Satan.

Maryland University professor Oliver Childs declaims; "Despite the feelings of the family...the final decision should be made by the medical authorities. Prolonging life creates a burden on family and friends....It can also be very expensive." Expenses which the burdened family is not to be allowed to shoulder.

No social-medical problem is complete without a pronouncement from neo-conservative medical economist Harry Schwartz, for three decades an editorial writer for the *New York Times*. Schwartz sneers at the "values of individual autonomy and the sanctity of human life" which have to give way to more important values, such as that health resources are limited, and that health care must be allocated rationally. Schwartz is nothing if not hard-nosed: "the harsh truth is that most of these people will never wake up. So, the basic

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problem is why we let so many vegetables receive useless care for so long." The problem, opines Schwartz, is that our health insurance systems, private as well as public, are "too mindlessly generous." Schwartz concludes: "The time to end this idiocy is now." (*USA Today*, May 30).

Our final specimen is Derek Humphry, head of the Hemlock Society, the most venerable of the right to suicide groups, and careful up to now to stress consent. Where does he stand on the case of Helga Wanglie? Humphry begins by saying that patients "should always have the right of choice to live or die," and if they are in a persistent vegetative state, their families should decide. OK, so what about Helga Wanglie? Here is Humphry's new and contradictory position: "If overwhelming medical opinion says treatment is pointless, courts should arbitrate disputes between doctors and families." Now just a minute: where do courts get the right to decide life or death? Does government have more of a right to commit murder than doctors, or what? And on what principles are the courts supposed to decide that "arbitration"?

No, the mask is off, and Doctor Assisted Death and Mr. Liberal Death With Dignity, and all the rest of the crew turn out to be simply Doctor and Mister Murder. Watch out Mr. and Ms. America: liberal humanists, lay and medical, are not only out to regulate your lives, and to fleece your wallets and pocketbooks. They're out to kill you! Libertarians, as embodied in the sainted "Nolan Chart," have always assumed that conservatives are in favor of economic liberty, whereas liberals are

in favor of civil, or personal liberty. *This is "personal liberty"?*

The excuses of these killers is that far more important than prolonging life is the "quality of life." But what if a key part of preserving and enhancing that quality is getting rid of this crew of murdering liberals, people whom Isabel Paterson, with wonderful perception and prophetic insight, termed "the humanitarian with the guillotine"? What then? So where do we sign up to assist *their* death? •

Rockwell vs. Rodney and the Libertarian World

by M.N.R.

Anyone who knows Lew Rockwell knows that he can take care of himself, that he doesn't need me or anyone else to leap to his defense. In fact, Lew enjoys it when libertarians go bananas about him, because it confirms his already low opinion of the Modal Libertarian. But I'm getting sick of it. I'm getting sick of cretins and half-illiterates, of bozos who can hardly parse a sentence, who have achieved nothing at all in their miserable lives, displaying the unmitigated gall, the flagrant chutzpah, to presume to sit down and read Lew out of libertarianism. A typical letter received: "Dear Mr. Rockwell: I didn't read your article, but I read Bill Bradford in *Liberty*, and I agree that you're a fascist, you're not a libertarian at all, and you should be read out of the human race." Bradford is a business man who decided to buy himself a libertarian magazine. Well fine, but

so what? What's he ever done apart from that? The fact that he *calls himself* a scholar and philosopher should cut no ice with anyone.

There are real problems in the world that cry out for libertarian analysis and action. One key problem was the late Gulf War, that made virtually every American "feel good about himself" and about the American State, and apparently accomplished nothing else — except the slaughter of about 200,000 Iraqis. One would think that libertarians would be passionately interested in this issue. Were they? Hell no. Most libertarians couldn't care less about the whole issue. Half of the LP members supported the war. And Bradford? As usual, he hemmed and hawed on both sides of the issue, getting indignant only at a few readers who *thought* he had opposed the Gulf War.

In a laid-back movement of this sort, one that cares little about such vital problems as war and mass murder, you would think it would take some truly cataclysmic issue to elicit widespread anathemas and excommunication. But you would be wrong. When Lew Rockwell came to the defense of the LAPD's beating of *one*, read one, criminal, Rodney King, one would have thought that the earth had opened and Armageddon had been launched at last. Such agony, such hatred, such *geschrei*, had not been seen in the libertarian movement since Ayn Rand kicked Nathaniel Branden out of *Paradise* in 1968.

From the hysteria and disproportionality, it is obvious that much more is going on here than is apparent on the surface, that as in many other cases, the Modals are