

The Hemlock Society's drive for murder with a liberal face

by Marianna Wertz

On Aug. 21, 1980, a group of fanatic death worshippers formed a small cult under the leadership of British subject Derek Humphry, a self-avowed atheist and former London *Times* columnist who got into the euthanasia business by poisoning his wife, a cancer victim. Humphry was assisted by Gerald Larue, a "humanist counselor" and professor of thanatology and geriatrics at the University of Southern California, and by Ann Wickett, a British novelist whom Humphry married one year after murdering his first wife. In the leftist milieu of Santa Monica, California, the group was considered just another kooky bunch by its neighbors.

Their stated purpose was to legalize euthanasia, the Nazi crime, in the United States. They gave their cult the name "Hemlock Society," to dignify their criminal effort by associating it with the death of the great philosopher Socrates, who died not by suicide, but was murdered with hemlock by a corrupt Athenian court. And they published the only book available in the United States with explicit instructions on how to commit suicide, giving it the catchy title, *Let Me Die Before I Wake*.

Under normal circumstances, such a bizarre undertaking would die its own natural death within a year or two. But under conditions of worldwide genocide being caused by the austerity policies of the International Monetary Fund, the Hemlock Society has grown and flourished. Just five years later, Humphry and the Hemlock Society are a major focus of favorable press attention, what one newspaper recently called the "torchbearer" of a burgeoning death lobby in the United States. Humphry has appeared on virtually every talk show in the nation; the Society boasts \$60,000 profit in 1984 alone from sales of the book; and Hemlock now claims 11,000 members worldwide.

Last month, on Feb. 9-10 in their home-base of Santa Monica, the Hemlock Society held its Second National Conference on Voluntary Euthanasia, attended by more than 250 individuals from the United States and Western Europe. The conference was titled "Good Life, Good Death, Through Control and Choice," the motto of the Society. It featured such panels as "Some Essentials of Suicide," "Memorial Societies and Funeral Prearrangement," and "The Sexual Needs of the Terminally Ill Person." Featured speakers included Dr. Julius Hackethal of West Germany, famous for his videotaped murder of a cancer patient with cyanide, and

the presidents of the euthanasia societies of both Great Britain and Holland, in which country euthanasia is legal.

Also at the conference were dozens of picketers and demonstrators from the Club of Life and the Schiller Institute, organizations founded by Lyndon and Helga LaRouche to defend the inalienable right of all people to full and productive lives. The demonstrators served "Jonestown Kool-Aid," aptly comparing the Hemlock Society's proceedings to the mass-suicide in Guyana in 1978. "There's no such thing as the right to die. Take them to Nuremberg and hang them high," they chanted, referring to the American Tribunal at Nuremberg, Germany following World War II, where the crime of euthanasia was declared to be a "crime against humanity," and perpetrators of this Nazi crime were hanged.

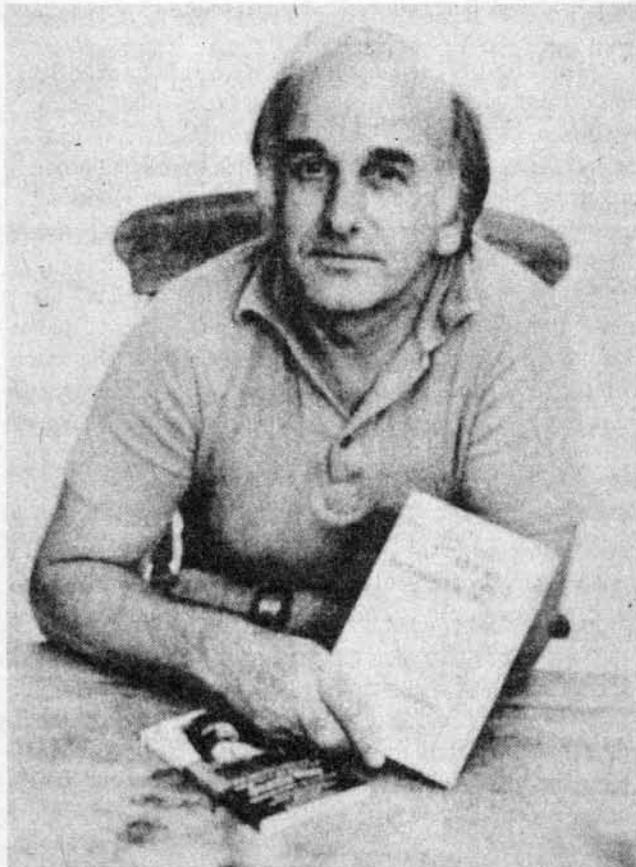
Illegal conference

The Hemlock Society's proceedings were entirely illegal under section 41 of the California penal code, which outlaws assisted suicide. The conference was also in violation of both the Constitution of the United States, under which all men and women are equal before the law, and of the international precedent set by the American Tribunal at Nuremberg. Members of the Club of Life and the Schiller Institute brought this fact to the attention of every authority with jurisdiction in the state of California, as well as President Reagan. But no law-enforcement officer was willing to act to cancel the conference. Indeed, so "respectable" had this ghoulish undertaking become, that the Los Angeles District Attorney's Office was actually represented in "debate" on one of the conference panels.

This paralysis of law enforcement in the face of mounting public pressure for the alleged "right" to die, is Hemlock's aim. Through their campaign for active voluntary euthanasia, Humphry and the Hemlock Society are out to undermine the fundamental values of the American population which underlie positive law. "We are the first organ in the U.S. to say that many times assisting a suicide is a decent thing and it ought to be lawful," Humphry told an interviewer for the Associated Press. Humphry is subverting the Judeo-Christian conception of the innate value of human life, best expressed as the notion of *the filioque*—the doctrine that the Holy Spirit flows from both the Father and the Son—and attempting to substitute for it the British conception of utility as the basis

for judging the value of human life.

"We believe in the right of the individual to choose to do with their body what they wish. We believe in choice," Humphry told the International Hemlock Society Conference. This utilitarianism, a British liberal doctrine, was the ethical basis of the Nazi concentration camps. This Jesuitical conception of free will, which asserts that suicide is the ultimate freedom to dispose of oneself, is precisely the state of mind of a concentration camp victim who willingly walks into the gas oven. In the context of a dying global economy, where



Derek Humphry: He poisoned his wife and now he wants to finish off the rest of us.

an elderly person feels the weight of his medical treatment as a burden on his loved ones, Humphry's "ethics" are precisely the brainwashing required to convince the victims of a global depression to seek what Hemlock calls "self-deliverance."

Indeed, the New Jersey Supreme Court in the case of Claire Conroy, an 84-year-old nursing home patient, recently applied this conception of "freedom" to all nursing home patients, who, under this decision, are now "free" to have their feeding tubes pulled if what the New Jersey court called the "burdens of living" outweigh the "benefits" of death.

Surgeon General C. Everett Koop, speaking four days before the Hemlock Society Conference to a Christian World

Affairs conference in Washington, D.C., identified the most recent historical precedent for this philosophy: "The seeds of Germany's holocaust were planted before Adolf Hitler came to power with the corruption of the medical profession—which planned euthanasia of the elderly, the insane, and people with tuberculosis and amputations—and corruption of the law."

Hemlock vs. Club of Life

Since its inception, the Hemlock Society has been strenuously opposed by the Club of Life. Page one of the *Hemlock Quarterly* of January 1983 identifies the Club of Life as its "extreme" opponent, but dismisses that opposition as "antics" because, as the *Quarterly* notes, "the television media, which normally reports every tiny demonstration in Los Angeles . . . entirely ignored the Club of Life. . . ."

Not so any longer. When Humphry appeared on Chicago's WBBM-AM all-news radio station Feb. 4 to plug his upcoming conference, Club of Life U.S. chairman Nancy Spannaus was there, placed on the show as a result of public demand, to counter his ravings. "This conference and the big effort to revive euthanasia is a test of the American population. Under Hitler, euthanasia was carried out quietly, without daring to tell the population, because the Nazis feared an uprising. In the United States, it is being carried out openly, under the banner of killing off useless people. If the American people don't reject the leaders of the euthanasia drive, they will have shown themselves to be worse than the Nazis were," she said.

Humphry responded by bragging that "hundreds" have killed themselves with the aid of his book.

Last week in Colorado, where Gov. Richard Lamm freely espouses his own version of Nazi euthanasia policy, the largest radio talk-show in Denver invited Humphry to preach his poison in support of a recently introduced "right to die" bill there. The Club of Life and the Schiller Institute demanded equal time. Humphry refused to appear anywhere in their proximity.

The Club of Life's effective opposition to the Hemlock Society's euthanasia conference itself drew extensive, positive press coverage, including a powerful indictment of Humphry by the *Sacramento Bee* in a Feb. 19 article referring to this writer: "Had Marianna Wertz chosen to die three years ago, few would have questioned her decision. Had Derek Humphry known her, he might have said it was the only thing she could do."

The article explains that by deciding to fight disease and death, I am able today to lead a normal life. Had Humphry been my counselor, I would be dead, one of hundreds of victims already claimed by the Hemlock Society's Jim Jones cult. Humphry once said that he differed from the Nazis in that they "discriminated" in who they killed. American justice is blind, or should be, when it comes to carrying out the law. The Hemlock Society should be prosecuted for murder.