

Malthusians embrace 'triage' for elderly

by Linda Everett

Back in 1984, many were scandalized when then-Colorado Gov. Richard Lamm told the nation's elderly to die and get out of the way of the next generation. But four years later, amidst budget cut proposals to slash Medicare and Social Security benefits, with editorials incessantly complaining of the demographics of the "old-old," a steady drum beat demanding that the elderly be cannibalized, for the "sake" of the next generation, has become all the rage. Private and public sector leaders have come to embrace Lamm's infamous "ethics of triage."

Today, Lamm graces the board of directors of one such group, the Washington-based Americans for Generational Equity, or AGE. AGE was founded four years ago by Sen. David Durenberger (R-Minn.) and Paul Hewitt, former director of the Senate Subcommittee on Intergovernmental Affairs. The group has some 500 members and 250 corporate and public interest sponsors—all dedicated to the thesis that the needs of the elderly must become "subordinate to America's overriding priorities of the future." Many AGE board members and advisers are drawn from the American Enterprise Institute, the Brookings Institution, and the Urban Institute. Its proposals have been termed "controversial," but in truth, are nothing less than genocidal. The group's publication, *The Generational Journal*, says we must begin to distinguish "the able-bodied from the disabled, the young old from the old-old, and the affluent from the poor and the near poor." Next, they'll set up the ghettos.

'A duty to die'

Chaired by Durenberger and co-chaired by Rep. Tim Penny (D-Minn.), AGE is billed as an "intergenerational movement based on the ideal of *stewardship* for the interests of the future—as applied not only to natural, but also to human and financial resources [emphasis in original]." That is, Americans have to be kept within the limits of the imposed economic collapse of their nation—no expanded production, no economic development, and no high-tech health care that promises to prolong life. As Lamm reiterated recently on NBC-TV: "We do not have a right, but a duty, to die." "We spend too much money" he said, on "the Faustian machine" that "brings people back from death just so they can die again tomorrow." He proposes AGE's solution to free up funds for children: taxing the Medicare and Social Security benefits of

all those "rich senior citizens in Florida."

AGE co-chair Penny complains that federal spending on Social Security is estimated to be more than one-fifth of the federal budget for Fiscal Year 1989. As today's elderly live longer, and more are added to the rolls with automatic cost-of-living increases, the cost escalates and undermines the system for future retirees. Today's "baby boomers," being "downwardly mobile" and dependent on two incomes, are unable to save for their retirement. To avoid an "intergenerational war" and assure the necessary baby boomer retiree funds, Penny calls for taxing all Social Security income, limiting Social Security cost-of-living adjustments on the basis of income, and making retirement mandatory at age 70, not at 65 when full Social Security and Medicare benefits are provided.

Rep. Jim Moody (D-Wis.), former co-chairman of AGE, wants to tap the assets of the aged and increase inheritance taxes to pay for nursing home care: "It's not fair to spend society's money to preserve the assets for someone's children." Durenberger rants, "Society doesn't pay for the education of most children. Yet it shovels out free health care for elderly millionaires."

AGE's board member and Wall Street banker Peter Peterson, who is also chairman of the board of the Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), proposes to solve the budget deficit by gutting Social Security and other entitlements, cutting back civil service and military retirement programs, and acting "decisively to put the lid on America's excessive and wasteful consumption of health care," especially by the elderly.

That Carla Anderson Hills, President-elect George Bush's nominee for U.S. trade representative, is an AGE board member, is no surprise. Hills had been a member of the malthusian Trilateral Commission since 1977—up until December 1988.

In 1984, Durenberger's good friend, Trilateralist and CFR member Zbigniew Brzezinski, authored *Democracy Must Work: A Trilateral Agenda for the 1980s*. It called for an end to free or subsidized assistance and for "people to make greater provision for themselves against the contingencies of unemployment, sickness, and old age."

Also among AGE's board of directors are: economist Pat Choate, New Age adviser to Gary Hart's 1980 presidential campaign; Donald Kennedy, Stanford University president; and Robert Vatter, vice president and economist at Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.

AGE adviser Daniel Callahan, co-founder and director of the Hastings Institute, a New York bioethics group specializing in euthanasia, wants the elderly to give up their "insatiable" desire to extend their lives. Better yet, listen to Dick Lamm: "We demand for our sake and the sake of the nation, the right to timely suicide. We demand that all hospitals, VA centers, and nursing homes be required to provide the *coup de grace* pill."