

AFL-CIO execs back Kennedy's death movement

The AFL-CIO Executive Board is now giving crucial support to policies which will rapidly destroy the American high-technology health care system and replace it with "alternatives" to hospital care — including organized murder by means of the British-inspired hospice movement.

Buried among the resolutions passed at the recent Executive Board meeting in Florida, along with the usual expansive pieces on the Kennedy-backed "Hospital Care for All Americans" legislation, is a policy statement entitled "Alternatives to Health Care."

The AFL-CIO stands committed to push as hard as it can for the full Kennedy health package, but, by simply taking Washington's pulse, one finds that the package will likely be tied in various knots in Congress. The resolution finds the cost of advanced medical care prohibitive and often unnecessary." Also, such programs as home health services, surgicenters and hospices are not growing as rapidly as they should, the Executive Board states.

To remedy this, the AFL-CIO proposes some sweeping changes in Medicare and Medicaid disbursement policies that would foster nonhospital care — a cornerstone of the entire Kennedy health package. But more importantly, the AFL-CIO tells its member unions to negotiate this "de-hospitalization" program into their contracts by providing union funding for hospice, surgicenters, and so forth.

The AFL-CIO leadership would have a hard time selling its membership on the idea that sick unionists or their families should forgo expensive hospital treatment — especially when it comes to saving a life. It is even harder to imagine most members buying the arguments about "death with dignity" offered by the hospice movement. No wonder, then, that the AFL-CIO has failed to report the contents of this resolution to its members.

The key proposal is the support for hospice treatment — an open statement of intent by the aged members of the AFL-CIO Executive Board to seek sanctioned triage for seriously ill union members. It received the imprimatur of octagenarian George Meany, the AFL-CIO President, and sailed through.

These policies are most strongly supported by Jewish Labor Committee networks inside the Federation,

which include individuals such as Jerry Wurf of AFSCME and Murray Finley of the Clothing Workers.

These individuals, along with William Winpisinger of the International Association of Machinists are also the strongest backers on the Executive Board of a 1980 Sen. Edward Kennedy presidential bid.

Lloyd McBride of the Steelworkers and similar technology growth-oriented union leaders apparently said nothing as the board rubber-stamped the resolution.

—L. Wolfe

Prolonging life is expensive

The AFL-CIO provided a fact sheet with their resolution. We print below their definition of hospice.

The most typical response to terminal illness has been hospitalization where efforts to prolong life have traditionally been made through the use of highly sophisticated forms of medical technology. Such heroic measures cost a great deal of money and do not relieve the unique emotional problems or the often excruciating pain of the terminally ill. An alternative to the intensive care unit of a hospital is hospice care.

Hospice care is a specialized, organized program stressing the relief of pain while providing supportive care for both the patient and family. Hospice care recognizes that a dying patient experiences not only physical pain, but psychological, social, spiritual and financial worries as well.

Therefore, every effort is made to encourage and support such patients to live their remaining days as fully and normally as possible. While supporting the patients and their families to come to terms with death. This support can be provided in either a hospice, a specialized facility, or in the home.