

Editorial

A very close call

All eyes were turned on the state of Washington Nov. 5, to see if the citizens there would become the first ever to pass a popular referendum in favor of Nazi euthanasia. Despite projections by pollsters that Initiative 119 would pass, and surveys by the Harvard School of Public Health saying that most Americans support euthanasia, the electorate rejected the referendum with a voter margin of 54 to 46%.

The international Death Lobby, whose leading representative in the United States right now is Derek Humphry's Hemlock Society, had put a lot into their Washington State effort. Liberal Washington, with a population of only 3 million and extremely "liberal" right-to-die laws on the books already, was considered a perfect place to get the ball rolling.

But it didn't work, and Americans now have the opportunity to roll back the trend which has taken us to the edge of the precipice.

It must be recognized that unofficial euthanasia is already widespread in the United States. Legal precedents all the way up to the Supreme Court have permitted the removal of food and water from allegedly terminally ill patients, upon the insistence of family members, often over the opposition of hospitals. Orders not to resuscitate very ill patients are common, and there is no way to judge how many elderly are "quietly" put to death in hospitals or nursing homes.

What was being proposed in Washington State was to expand this process, to the point where doctors could be ordered to "follow the wishes" of their patients, to kill them. Initiative 119 would have mandated doctors to follow such orders if any doctor determined that the requestor was "terminally ill," and the fact would not even be recorded on the death certificate.

In Holland, the one country where similar legislation is already in effect, the story is already leaking out about massive abuse, leading to thousands of undesired deaths. There is no question but that the Washington measure, in an age of exorbitantly expensive medical care, could and would be used in the same way.

The Washington State Medical Association, which

has supported "death with dignity" legislation that stops just short of active euthanasia, opposed Initiative 119. So did the Catholic Church and numerous other Christian denominations. But these institutions all shrank from making the most truthful statement of all: Initiative 119 was Nazi euthanasia.

Thus, when the "LaRouche in '92" presidential campaign began to tour the state with 50,000 copies of a flyer attacking the referendum as "Nazi," many other opponents of the measure joined the proponents in crying, "extremist." Yet there is every indication that the truth stated in that flyer had its effect, by forcing even those who grew hysterical at seeing the reality of their own degradation, to draw back from voting for Initiative 119.

It might even turn out that the drive to stop Nazi euthanasia helped to turn the tide against the twin evil which was also on the Washington ballot, the pro-abortion initiative. Humphry has gloated that the legalization of abortion through *Roe v. Wade* opened the door to his campaign for legal suicide and euthanasia, and philosophically, he's definitely right. At present, the abortion referendum is running 50-50, with the outcome to be determined by absentee ballots.

The euthanasia initiative was also badly hurt by a flurry of publicity around certain death cases right before the election. First, there was the news that Humphry's second wife, Ann Wickett, who had founded the Hemlock Society with him, had committed suicide. In her suicide note, she blamed Humphry for trying to drive her to her death, and revealed that he had killed his first wife, not helped her commit suicide.

Also personalizing the issue of "legal suicide," was the news about the latest victims of Dr. Death, Dr. Jack Kevorkian of Michigan. Kevorkian killed two non-terminally ill women in late October, in another high-publicity stunt.

Washington State voters brought us back one small step from the brink. It remains for Americans, and others, to reshape their policies positively, around the sacredness of every individual human life.