

Post-election agenda sets up inter-generational war

by Kathleen Klenetsky

Would you be shocked if someone were to come up to and say: "Your grandfather has been around long enough. He doesn't work anymore, doesn't pay taxes, and is receiving so much in Social Security and Medicare benefits that the budget deficit is skyrocketing. Don't you think it's high time we got rid of him, so that the younger generation can get its fair share of the country's resources?"

You probably would be. But that is exactly the message which the U.S. establishment intends to deliver in the coming months—no matter who wins the presidential election. Their expectation is that economic conditions will become so horrific that normal people will allow themselves to be provoked into an inter-generational war against their own aging parents and grandparents.

The Concord Coalition: sowing discord

One of the principal messengers for this resurrection of the Nazi "useless eaters" concept will be the Concord Coalition, a recently established bipartisan entity dedicated to the proposition that "overconsumption" on the part of the nation's burgeoning over-65 population is the root cause of the United States' economic collapse. It maintains that massive reductions in spending on the elderly are required to reduce the budget deficit.

Launched shortly after Labor Day, the Concord Coalition grew out of discussions among a coterie of establishment "insiders" who believe the time has come for launching a wholesale assault on the two main social programs which support the nation's elderly: Social Security and Medicare. These two programs make up the bulk of the federal government's so-called entitlements system. With the aging of the population (itself a dramatic shift in the United States' demographic profile, resulting, in no small part, from the zero

population growth mania of the last three decades), these programs are growing at an increasingly rapid rate, making them prime targets for those know-nothings who insist that the country can budget-cut its way out of the depression.

The Concord Coalition's principals have minced no words in describing their mission as one of promoting the idea that killing off grandma and grandpa is not only legitimate, but necessary, to deal with mounting economic pressures.

Peter Petersen, one of the four founders of the group, has been railing for years against what he claims are "runaway" entitlements. A Wall Street investment banker and chairman of the elite New York Council on Foreign Relations (CFR), Petersen wrote a groundbreaking book several years back called *On Borrowed Time*, which helped give political currency to the now-popular notion that the "greedy" elderly are robbing America's young people blind.

In a speech to an American Assembly conference in May 1991, Petersen claimed that unchecked growth in Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid "may progressively and *directly* threaten the basic character of our society's institutions and values." Solving the budget deficit, he went on, "has never received the serious political attention it deserves. . . . The dirty little secret is we did not do very much about the *big spending items* that have been ballooning out of sight. These include, of course, the vast entitlement programs for the elderly. . . .

"Our national interest is best served by programs that direct public resources toward *investment* and *youth*—not toward consumption and age," Petersen asserted. "We need a new broad-based, bipartisan political coalition to shape and give powerful political expression to a new American consensus that transcends special interest politics and constituencies" (emphases in original).

Lloyd Cutler, another one of the Concord Coalition's "four horsemen," has also been a longtime "granny-basher." In 1980, while serving as White House counsel to President Jimmy Carter, Cutler penned an article for the CFR's journal, *Foreign Affairs*, in which he urged the United States to adopt a parliamentary system of government, on the grounds that such a system insulates elected officials from constituency pressure, thus making it politically easier for governments to institute economic austerity.

The coalition's two main public spokesmen, Paul Tsongas and Sen. Warren Rudman (R-N.H.), share the same orientation.

Tsongas, who ran unsuccessfully for the Democratic presidential nomination, campaigned on a program of entitlement cuts, coupled with tax hikes, especially on energy use. For the past year, he has frequently warned that "inter-generational war" will soon break out if the elderly don't stop using up what he claims is an unfair portion of the economic pie. Of course, the whole point of the Concord Coalition is to whip up such an inter-generational conflict, mobilizing the young to slash spending on the elderly.

Rudman, co-author of the Gramm-Rudman-Hollings balanced-budget fiasco, announced earlier this year that he would not run for reelection out of frustration that the "system" was too beholden to "special interests," particularly those representing senior citizens, to permit the deep cuts in entitlement spending he claims are necessary. In fact, in an interview published in the April 6 issue of *Time* magazine, Rudman suggested that it might be necessary for the United States to institute a one-party government to create the political consensus required to slash Social Security and Medicare.

Fascist propaganda

Tsongas and Rudman held a press conference in Washington on Oct. 20 to announce the Concord Coalition's short-term organizing plans. Displaying charts graphically depicting the growth in entitlement programs, Tsongas and Rudman bluntly announced, "Entitlements must be put on the table." "We've got to move more toward consumption-based taxes," they said. "We do have to means-test entitlements."

The two cited a recently published study entitled "The Strengthening of America," as the budget-cutting model the next President should follow. Produced by the Washington, D.C.-based Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), the report calls for nearly \$2 trillion in budget reductions and tax increases over the next 10 years. The report states that a "critical part of this effort" will be to put a cap on entitlement expenditures, and to downsize Medicare and Medicaid.

Tsongas and Rudman, a member of the panel which wrote the CSIS report, told the press that these draconian measures were required to placate the international financial community. "The most important thing this country needs is a plan on the deficit, on growth, on entitlements that the market can look at and say, 'That will work,'" Tsongas

declared. Echoed Rudman: "If we just did something to convince the world financial markets that we were serious about the deficit . . . you would see growth in this country."

Rudman is right on one thing: As a result of such a plan, you would see growth in this country, but it would be growth in unemployment, welfare, homelessness, and death rates among the elderly, as opposed to real economic development that could produce a bigger "pie" to support the population at a higher standard of living.

But that, in fact, is the dirty little secret behind the Concord Coalition and parallel efforts, such as the CSIS study and Ross Perot's economic program.

The U.S. establishment has deliberately chosen to maintain a bankrupt economic and financial system through such mechanisms as looting pensions, cutting back on health care, and slashing wages. And the Concord Coalition's mission is to figure out how to make this politically palatable to the population.

The coalition has mapped out an ambitious propaganda campaign for the post-election period. According to a spokesman, the group has already kicked off a grassroots organizing effort, complete with an "800" toll-free number, and hopes to set up branches in every state.

Additionally, over the coming months Tsongas and Rudman will go on a series of what the coalition calls "road shows," traveling to Boston, Chicago, New York, Atlanta, Los Angeles, and other key cities to hold "economic town meetings" where they and invited "experts" will explain to the local citizenry why grandma and grandpa have to stop using up so many medical and other resources.

Although the Concord Coalition will theoretically operate on a strictly educational basis, one knowledgeable source indicated that it might opt to become involved directly in political action sometime in the future.

Both Tsongas and Rudman have talked openly about the possibility of creating a third political party to implement their proposed austerity program. As Tsongas said at the Oct. 20 press conference: "We are not a third party. But we both believe passionately that unless something is done, there will be a third party. It will be as follows. On the social side, pro-choice, pro-gay rights, pro-civil rights, pro-environment. On the other side of the program, pro-growth, pro-business, pro-fiscal discipline."

In fact, such a third party already exists, at least in embryo. Trilateral Commission member John Anderson, who ran as an independent presidential candidate in 1980, has teamed up with Gov. Lowell Weicker of Connecticut, among others, to form the Independence Party. Founding member Theodore Lowi, a professor at Cornell, has said that a strong affinity exists between the Independence Party and the Concord Coalition's economic platform. Sources at the coalition report that a host of "big names" will soon sign onto the group's board. Former Rep. William Gray (D-Pa.), who chaired the House Budget Committee, is among them.