

## Australia Dossier by Allen Douglas

### Murder by budget cuts

*The New Zealand government is systematically, relentlessly murdering its own citizens.*

At the outset of World War II, Adolf Hitler issued a handwritten order, backdated to the first day of the war, in which he stated that he “considered it to be proper that the ‘life unworthy of life’ of severely mentally ill persons be eliminated by actions that bring about death.” In this way, he said, “a certain saving in hospitals, doctors, and nursing personnel could be brought about.”

Precisely that Nazi policy is now being applied in New Zealand today, a policy that Vice President Al Gore plans to extend to the United States. Toward that end, Gore anointed Prime Minister Jenny Shipley—who, as New Zealand’s Health Minister, had helped design the “reforms” of the country’s genocidal health care system—to keynote his Jan. 14-15 “Reinventing Government” conference in Washington. And, perhaps related to Gore’s plans, a delegation from the U.S. Congress’s General Accounting Office spent the month of September in New Zealand, studying the “New Zealand model,” the genesis and some details of which *EIR* exposed last week (“Al Gore’s New Zealand Model: ‘Reinventing’ Corruption, Genocide”). But, just since then, *EIR* has received further data on the latest slashes in overall medical care there, beginning with mental health.

For instance, a mentally ill man in Christchurch committed suicide on Jan. 5, as he was awaiting trial for the murder of a young girl. The man’s family blasted the government for the budget slashes which had “inevitably” caused both deaths. “The health system is run down and strapped for cash anyway, but mental health is the poor cousin,” and their son had not received

the sort of treatment he so clearly needed, they charged.

This relentless elimination of the mentally ill is truly shocking: New Zealand has the highest youth suicide rate in the world, and some 25 studies have been carried out since 1989 on the country’s disastrous mental health situation. One of them, the 1996 “Mason Report,” found that “in any one year 25-35% of our population have symptoms that meet criteria for a mental disorder and that approximately one-third of these people have a disorder which is serious or chronic.” New Zealand’s response to such studies, has been to *further cut mental health funds*. Indicative is the number of mental ward hospital beds: 500 per 100,000 people 50 years ago, which had fallen to 225 per 100,000 by the time New Zealand’s “reforms” began in 1984, and now stand at 38 per 100,000.

Maxine Gay, the head of the New Zealand Schizophrenia Fellowship and president of the Federation of Trade Unions, charged in 1997 that the (often-unreported) suicide rate among the mentally ill had skyrocketed. “It is a genocide really, of the mentally ill,” she said.

But, that genocide is merely the cutting edge of the New Zealand “reforms,” whose latest phase is the “reform” of hospital waiting lists initiated in late 1998. Almost 100,000 people now languish on such lists, while at least another 100,000 people who need operations are not even allowed on the lists—this in a total population of only 3.4 million people. So, to “solve” this problem, the government has just established a new surgical booking system, under which a tiny fraction of those who had managed to get on the

lists will be “guaranteed” an operation, while the rest will be left to fend for themselves, perhaps to try to raise tens of thousands of dollars for an operation—this in a country which, before the “reforms,” had free, high-quality universal health care.

To see how this new policy will work, look at Waikato Hospital, the nation’s second largest. Only 406 patients out of 9,536 (4%) on its waiting lists will be guaranteed surgery under the new booking system. The next tier (4,315) will get a letter stating that they “may” get an operation, while all the rest will be told they are “unlikely” to get one. For example, the following patients recently received a letter which stated, “You have been retained on a waiting list. Unfortunately, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to offer you treatment at this time. You will be reconsidered for treatment within 12 months”:

- Heather Stephenson, 68, who has corneal problems, cataracts in both eyes, and who is almost blind.
  - Brian Mundy, 70, who has been waiting almost two years for a triple heart bypass.
  - Katherine Oliphant, 36, who had cancer of the cervix 18 months ago, and needs a hysterectomy because of heavy bleeding and pain.
  - Francesca Paul, 3, who has severe tonsillitis, who has been on a waiting list for 18 months, and who is now almost immune to antibiotics.
  - Ina Mitchum, 84, whose prolapsed uterus hangs outside her vagina.
  - Malcolm Read, 10, who has a concave chest which is stunting his heart and lungs, causing severe pain.
- Meanwhile, seven patients have died recently while on the waiting lists of another major hospital, Palmerston North, while another 30 on its waiting list have been offered treatment—in *Australia*.