

Editorial

The shift against managed care

Over the last few months, beginning with the arrival of the financial crisis in Asia, a new recognition of reality has been evident in the U.S. population. One of the salient issues on which this is reflected, is the murderous swindle known as “managed care.”

It was in November 1996 that the LaRouche political movement first began to target the practice of health maintenance organizations. “Managed Care Is a Crime Against Humanity,” was the title of a policy forum addressed by Lyndon LaRouche and several members of the health community, in Washington, D.C., at that time. The argument which the speakers made was straightforward: The philosophy of managed care is a modern method of applying Hitler’s policy of cutting support for “useless eaters,” by increasing the morbidity rate among the population of health care recipients. In other words, HMOs, in particular, are *killing people!*

During the year following this event, especially as the numbers of people being forced into managed care by their employers, or by state-administered health care systems, skyrocketed, the charges against the HMOs grew from a murmur into a roar. Legislation seeking to mandate patient protections in some area or another (remember drive-by deliveries of babies?) was implemented in 44 states of the union. More than 100 pieces of legislation were introduced in the Federal government as well.

In his keynote to the anti-managed-care forum, LaRouche proposed not only a general change in orientation toward people—toward valuing each and every person as a creature made in the image of God—but also some specific legislative approaches. This included passing the equivalent of health civil rights laws, which would penalize insurance companies for adopting policies which result in the withdrawal of food or needed medical or surgical care. This approach means mandating a policy, as well as enacting specific laws.

The revolt against managed care has now reached the point where precisely such policies are being put into effect. Republicans are breaking from their party’s position of “no government interference”; Democrats

are overcoming their fear of the ghost of Hillary Clinton’s initial (greatly overspecified) health care bill. Republican Charlie Norwood of Georgia has introduced a bill which would permit a patient to sue an HMO for damages—something which the cost-cutters are currently protected from by law. On March 31, the Democrats introduced a similar bill, called the Patients’ Bill of Rights Act of 1998, which puts into law the general policy statements which have been made by President Clinton on this matter.

Norwood’s bill has 225 sponsors, coming from both parties. It is also supported by numerous medical and advocacy groups. While Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott (R-Miss.) and House leader Dick Armey (R-Tex.) have vociferously opposed the consumer protections in Norwood’s bill, many other Republicans have cosponsored it. It is quite likely that the revolt against managed care is going to be a critical one in the 1998 Congressional elections.

Indicative of the mood, as well, is the campaign being run by attorney-physician Harvey Wachsman, to destroy the ability of the managed care firms to continue their murderous practices. A top malpractice attorney, Wachsman is determined to put HMOs out of business, because of their deadly results. He calls them agents of “managed fraud,” and is organizing a broad effort with medical experts from Harvard, Yale, Johns Hopkins, along with other major institutions, to convince Congress to eliminate the HMO threat.

It is paradoxical, of course, that the anti-HMO campaign is proceeding at the same time that Dr. Jack Kevoorkian’s murder count has reached more than 100 victims, and Oregon has included euthanasia (“assisted suicide”) as a “service” for the medically indigent. The “feel good,” cost-cutting program of euthanasia is the logical extension of the HMO cost-cutting mentality, but people seem to be able to recognize it more easily when they are up against their HMO.

A reassertion of the fight for the dignity of human life in the area of health, is a good place to start reversing the slide of the last 30 years.