



Euthanasia Prevention Coalition

NEWSLETTER IMPOSED DEATH

Issue #26
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Euthanasia Paper Covers the Important Current Issues.

The Euthanasia Paper has been developed to convince people who have not yet decided their personal position on euthanasia and assisted suicide.

Since the arrest of Evelyn Martins in British Columbia, the media has been working on We believe that the Euthanasia Paper is the best way to counter-act the current media campaign and influence Canadian society to oppose euthanasia and assisted killing.

The Euthanasia Paper features articles on: Tracy Latimer and the Royal Prerogative of Mercy, Dr. Balfour Mount (the father of palliative care in Canada) has an article comparing the Canadian situation to the Netherlands, Professor Dick Sobsey's article on why our laws should not be changed, the problem of elder abuse, etc.

The Euthanasia Paper will be selling for: \$15 per 100 copies, less than 1000 copies, \$14 per 100 copies, less than 5000 copies, \$13 per 100 copies, less than 10000 copies, \$12 per 100 copies, more than 10000 copies.

We are urging groups and individuals to make a bulk order of the euthanasia paper and distribute it in their communities and churches, or to have them inserted in community newspapers.

Since the arrest of Evelyn Martins in British Columbia, the issue of assisted suicide will once again be discussed in the public domain.

This is our opportunity to effect Canadian attitudes. The time is now. Please consider donating to this important project or supporting it by buying the paper.

Sample copies will be available soon.

Death Zealot Kills Two

By: Alex Schadenberg - July 4, 2002

Evelyn Martens has recently been charged with counselling Leyanne Burchell of Vancouver BC, to commit suicide on June 26, 2002; and Monique Charest of Duncan BC, to commit suicide on January 7, 2002.

Evelyn Martens is a leading member of the Canadian Right to Die Society where she assists John Hofsess, founder of the Right to Die Society of Canada.

Information as to what Martens did or how she did it is unknown to the general public due to a court ordered publication ban but police are reviewing other unexplained sudden deaths.

In Canada it is illegal to counsel, aid or abet someone to commit suicide. Section 241 of the Criminal Code states: Every one who (a) *counsels a person to commit suicide*, or (b) *aids or abets a person to commit suicide*, whether suicide ensues or not, is guilty of an offense and liable to imprisonment for a term not exceeding fourteen years.

The Right to Die Society of Canada is not just a lobby group that attempts to change the minds of politicians and the Canadian public. They are an organization that outwardly thwarts and ignores our Canadian laws in order to extend their views about radical individual autonomy.

From our knowledge Evelyn Martens does not have a degree in Psychology, Psychiatry and is not a social worker who's expertise is depression and suicide counselling. She is not concerned with directing depressed or suicidal persons toward other options. She is an activist who has decided to take the law in her own hands.

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Underground Death Culture Pushes Assisted Suicide Movement

By Dirk Meissner

The Canadian Press - July 18, 2002

VICTORIA - They compare them-selves to midwives helping the birth process or doctors healing the sick.

People who help the terminally ill commit suicide provide what they consider a necessary service - even if it's against the law.

A Vancouver criminologist says there's a worldwide underground assisted suicide movement. He calls it the "deathing counterculture."

"It's organized and now the underground is developing an infrastructure," says Russel Ogden, who's been studying covert euthanasia for more than a decade.

There's referrals, consultations and house calls.

"It's a serious movement," said Ogden. "It's got people in it who believe very strongly in their cause, the so-called right to die."

Assisted suicide is back in the Canadian news after an almost decade-long absence. Evelyn Martens, 71, of suburban Victoria, faces assisted-suicide-related charges in connection with the deaths of two women.

Leyanne Burchell, 52, a Vancouver school teacher, died June 26.

Monique Charest, 64, a former nun, died last January in Duncan, B.C., 60 kilometres north of Victoria.

It is not an offence in Canada to commit

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suicide, but it is illegal to counsel or assist in a suicide. The maximum prison sentence is 14 years.

Earlier this week, Martens elected to be tried before a judge and jury. Her lawyer, Catherine Tyhurst, said Martens wants her peers to judge her case.

It's difficult to estimate the number of assisted suicides carried out because they are not documented or reported to official agencies, Ogden said.

And the movement has developed methods of suicide - primarily helium gas - that cannot be detected.

"These products and services were a consequence of government's refusal to address the right-to-die issue," Ogden said.

"In the underground, necessity is the motherhood of all invention."

Field workers or field practitioners in the right-to-die movement frequently travel far from their homes to carry out assisted suicides. Ogden said they are paid for their travel expenses and accept donations for their services.

He said the movement gained huge momentum in Canada in the early 1990's after the Supreme Court of Canada rejected Victoria mother Sue Rodriguez's plea for an assisted suicide.

Members of the right-to-die movement in Canada felt rejected by lawmakers, politicians and doctors and decided to move forward on their own, providing assisted suicides through their clandestine and growing network, Ogden said.

Rodriguez, who had Lou Gehrig's disease (amyotrophic lateral sclerosis), committed suicide in 1994 after the high-profile legal battle. Her death was reported as an assisted suicide, but whoever was involved has never come forward or been arrested.

Anne Mullens, a Victoria writer who probed assisted suicides in her 1996 book *Timely Death: Considering Our Last Rights*, said what Ogden's so-called deathing

counterculture appears to be a reaction to growing public feelings about assisted suicides.

In recent polls, about 75 per cent of Canadians support some form of legal doctor-assisted suicide, she said.

Thirty-five years ago, polls indicated only 50% of Canadians supported assisted suicide.

"People are uncomfortable with the details, but many want the right to end their life," Mullens said.

She compared the right-to-die movement to the movement to legalize contraception in Canada in the early and mid-1900's.

People resorted to a vast underground network that provided contraception even though it was against the law, Mullens said.

"There was an underground contraception counterculture," she said. "The doctors weren't doing it. We're seeing that same sort of thing. The risk-takers can't wait."

John Hofsess, founder of the DeathNet Web site who was a prominent spokesman in the right-to-die movement during the Rodriguez case, has not been reachable since Martens was arrested.

Ogden told the Standing Senate Committee on Social Affairs about the underground movement during hearings in March 2000.

"(It) is virtually unstoppable and it appears to be a growth industry," he told Senators.

"This is an entrepreneurial response to what are seen as barriers to legal, medically assisted death. It is an outcome of prohibition."

He said governments must consider the consequences of choosing prohibition of assisted suicide and euthanasia.

Ogden said the movement even holds meetings that gather members of numerous right-to-die organizations around the world. The last meeting he knows of was held in Vancouver in May 2001. It was attended by about 40 people from seven countries.

The Seattle Times newspaper reported many of the people attending the secret meeting agreed that terminally ill patients want a doctor's help in ending their lives.

But underground members have virtually given up on lobbying for laws legalizing doctor-assisted suicide, fearing it gives doctors too much power and sets up a regulatory burden, the newspaper said.

Mullens said the government must get involved because a growing, unregulated underground is becoming deeply involved in life and death decisions.

Only Oregon and the Netherlands allow doctor-assisted suicides.

Nurses in Missouri and Texas Charged with Killing Patients

Reuters - July 18, 2002

Columbia, Mo., - A Missouri grand jury indicted a former veterans' hospital nurse today on charges of killing 10 patients in 1992, while in Texas another grand jury has charged a nurse with killing 4 elderly patients about 18 months ago.

The indictment here said Richard Williams, now 36, administered the drug succinylcholine, a derivative of curare that is used as a poison by South American Indians, to kill 9 men and 1 woman while working as a nurse at Truman Memorial Veterans Hospital in Columbia.

A prosecutor said he would announce next week whether he would seek the death penalty.

Though Mr. Williams was charged by the authorities last month, prosecutors sought a formal indictment, returned today by a grand jury here in Boone County that heard from 121 witnesses.

Prosecutors have yet to describe a motive for the killings, whose victims' ranged in age from 58 to 85.

Mr. Williams who worked at the hospital from 1989 to 1993, was implicated by new technology that detected a byproduct of the poison in the victims' remains.

In Texas, meanwhile, the authorities unsealed an indictment today charging the nurse there, Vickie Dawn Jackson, 36, with killing four elderly patients by injecting them with lethal doses of a muscle relaxant.

The deaths occurred about 75 miles northwest of Dallas, at Nocona General Hospital, where as many as 20 other people also died in suspicious circumstances from December 2000 to February 2001.

The bodies of 10 people who died at the Nocona hospital during that period have been exhumed to check for traces of mivacurium chloride, the muscle relaxant that Mrs. Jackson is charged with using in the 4 deaths cited by the indictment.

The hospital, which has about 45 beds, called in the authorities to investigate after discovering that several vials of mivacurium chloride were missing.

Nocona is in Montague County, whose district attorney, Tim Cole, said further indictments might be issued as tests were carried out on exhumed bodies over the next few months.

The indictment against Ms. Jackman, which was returned on Tuesday, charges her with capital murder, but Mr. Cole said he was not sure whether he would seek the death penalty.

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In the same way, Ruth von Fuchs of the Canadian Right to Die Society is involved with producing and distributing the "Exit Bag - Homicide Bag" world-wide. This plastic bag has been designed for optimum effectiveness in killing persons who wear the bag. To aid or abet suicide is illegal in Canada.

The suicide bag is not only tailor-made for committing suicide, but it is also useful as a device to be put over the head of your unsuspecting elderly mother-in-law or a person with a disability. The production of suicide gadgets directly threaten vulnerable persons with disabilities or elderly Canadians whose care is considered too onerous or expensive.

When Ruth von Fuchs was featured on a call-in television show on January 15, 2002 she stated that her training to assist people commit suicide was that she was a: 'caring, non-judgmental person.' In other words she is not trained to help people and is primarily concerned about recklessly disregarding the laws and safeguards that exist to protect vulnerable Canadians in order to effect a fanatic vision.

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition supports our current laws. Our legal counsel and disability leader, **Hugh Scher** stated that: "These are criminal code offenses for good reasons. Particularly they are there to protect the vulnerable, they are there to protect the victims whose lives will be taken with or without consent."

Disability Rights Activist **Mark Pickup** from Alberta reacted to this case by stating: "Is the issue one of choice in dying? No, its something larger. The bigotry of utilitarianism. If Granny Martens helped a depressed suicidal but healthy teenager commit suicide, she would be universally reviled. Are the incurably ill or disabled lives not worth living? Is it OK to assist them in death?"

Interestingly, just this week researchers in Oregon have released a study that states that almost 90% of those who request assistance in suicide in Oregon, where assisted suicide is legal, change their minds. **Dr. Susan Tolle**, director of the *Center for Ethics in Health Care* at Oregon Health & Science University stated that: 'most seriously ill people who ask about doctor-assisted suicide are actually afraid of pain or other issues and need to be reassured.' Dr. Tolle said that: "The doctor should ask, 'What are you afraid of? What are you worried about?'" They should then provide the proper care.

Did Evelyn Martens ask her suicide victims what they were afraid of, or what they were worried about? Did she direct them to where they could find the care that they needed?

Assisted suicide does not care for the needs of the individual nor does it bring a death with dignity.

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition is committed to maintaining the current laws that protect all Canadians and we will demand that the full weight of the law be used to stop other death zealots from murdering and pressuring others to kill themselves. We will continue to direct people toward the compassionate care they need.

Pro-Euthanasia Group in Australia to Market Death Bags

By: Patrick Goodenough - July 10, 2002
CNS News - Pacific Rim Bureau Chief

Australian euthanasia activists plan to begin manufacturing customized suicide kits in an effort to get around government moves to ban the importation of similar items from abroad.

In an announcement that has shaken anti-euthanasia campaigners, euthanasia advocate Dr. Philip Nitschke - known for his computerized "death machine" and a proponent of a floating euthanasia clinic - said he had a waiting list of around 50 people who want the bags.

Nitschke, who heads a group called Exit Australia, said some 500 would be made in Queensland state, using a design intended to be an improvement on the "exit bag" made available in recent years by Canada's Right to Die Network.

The bags, made of heavy-duty plastic and featuring a collar to seal around the user's neck and deprive him of oxygen, would bear warnings saying they were dangerous and should not be placed over the head, he said.

The warnings are thought to be an attempt to sidestep potential legal problems.

Similarly, instructions on how the bags should be used to induce death will not be made available with the bags. However, instructions for their proper use would likely appear on an Internet website based on a foreign server, according to Nitschke.

"There's a special way you hold the bag and you then go to sleep, and it's only when you go to sleep that the bag comes into play," he was quoted as saying. "A death from low oxygen is a peaceful death."

Nitschke maintained the kits would be available free of charge, only to members of Exit Australia, a group claiming a membership of more than 2,000.

The Canadian organization, which sold its version for around \$30 (US) each, also asserted that only its members could order them. But leading anti-euthanasia activist Wesley Smith said last year he had ordered a kit and had it delivered by mail "in a plain white envelope and with no questions asked."

Also last year, Nitschke said Australians wanting to kill themselves were ordering the bags over the Internet from Canada, but the federal government stepped in and said it would review the importation.

An advertisement for the Canadian "self-deliverance" tools said the bag should be used with sedatives.

"It has an adjustable collar (with elastic sewn into the back and a six-inch Velcro strip in front) for a snug but comfortable fit."

"It comes with a flannelette lining inside the collar so that the plastic won't irritate sensitive skin. And it comes with an optional separate terry-cloth neckband to create a 'turtleneck' for added comfort and snugness of fit."

The Australian version is expected to be unveiled at a press conference next month.

'Better than jumping off a bridge'

Pro-lifers called Wednesday for the Queensland state government to investigate what it called "this latest dangerous outrage by Nitschke and voluntary euthanasia advocates." Right to Life Australia president Margaret Tighe said the news was alarming.

"There are many vulnerable people in the community who sadly feel that life is no longer worth living. With Nitschke's suicide bags so freely available, how many will die as a result?"

The use of "exit bags" was described in detail in the controversial 1991 euthanasia how-to book, *Final Exit*, by Hemlock Society co-founder Derek Humphry.

At a "World Conference on Assisted Dying" in Boston in 2000, Humphry presented the bag and other suicide aids, and was quoted as saying it was better that people use such methods than "guns or knives or jumping off a bridge."

In a statement still available on the Internet, Canada's Right to Die Network played down the controversial nature of its bag, saying it was "of limited usefulness and modest interest to members of the right to die society of Canada. By no stretch of the imagination can it be called 'new' or 'newsworthy.'"

It accused journalists, egged on by pro-lifers,

of getting their facts wrong about the bags, and said that in the absence of accompanying drugs, the bags were useless.

"Given appropriate medication, death is likely to occur without a bag as barbiturate overdoses have done for decades. However the bag may play a limited role in reducing the risk of protracted coma. It is therefore not an 'aid to suicide' as 'pro-lifers' allege ..."

The statement prompted Canada's Euthanasia Prevention Coalition executive director Alex Schadenberg to write: "It is obvious that the only defense that the Right to Die Society can make is to deny that the Exit Bag is what it is."

Australia's 'Doctor Death', Nitschke has long been regarded as a pioneer by the voluntary euthanasia movement. Under the world's first euthanasia law, in Australia's Northern Territory in 1996, he helped four of his patients die, using computer software he had designed.

Nitschke's "death machine" comprised a computer hooked up to a hypodermic needle inserted into the patient's arm. The patient had to answer a series of on-screen questions. The final one told the patient that if he pressed the space bar he would die.

If he did so, the equipment delivered a fatal dose of the lethal barbiturate Nembutal, killing the patient in minutes.

The territory's law was subsequently overturned by the federal government, and Nitschke has been campaigning since to bring it back across Australia.

In 2000, Nitschke was advocating use of a low-oxygen tent into which inert gases could be pumped, allowing two people to commit suicide simultaneously.

When Dutch activists launched a floating abortion clinic last summer, intending to operate in territorial waters off countries where abortion is illegal, Nitschke expressed keen interest on adopting a similar approach, offering one-way euthanasia journeys followed by burials at sea.

Last May, Nitschke was an adviser to a 69-year-old Australian woman, Nancy Crick, who killed herself with barbiturates surrounded by supporters, in defiance of the law. After her death an autopsy found no sign of the bowel cancer Crick had earlier been treated for, and

which she and her supporters had said was terminal.

Nitschke said this week the continuing police investigation was hounding him and those who witnessed her suicide.

"My phone records have been gone through, we've had search warrants, we've lost computers, we've lost files. It's something sort of reminiscent of acts you might see directed against urban terrorists, but not against people who sat peacefully with a woman who acted legally to end her life," he told a medical students' conference.

Our Opportunity is Now

The positive media reports about Evelyn Martins has created a negative stir among people who support Caring over Killing. Due to the media focus on assisted suicide, we have the opportunity to promote our message to a public who are seeking information.

The Euthanasia Prevention Coalition was established to prepare a well-informed, broadly based network of groups and individuals who support measures that will create an effective social barrier to euthanasia and assisted suicide.

This means that we need to build an effective coalition of people who are capable of presenting a rational and educated voice. An effective social barrier is created when a significant number of people can understand and enunciate our position effectively.

This is why our newsletters are full of important information articles rather than pithy summaries. Our goal is to prepare a well-informed group of supporters.

This is also why we are producing the Euthanasia Paper. It is an effective tool for building support. It is cost effective, attractive and easy to read. It has been designed to solidify people who have not taken a position on the issue.

The opportunity is now. Please support this important and effective project.