

Government From Cradle to Grave Near Reality in 'Death' Programs

SO far as has been made public, the federal government hasn't undertaken to regulate life after death, but bureaucrats are moving right in with the family at the time of death, the reading of the will, and negotiating the price of a funeral.

The National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH), a branch of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) has launched a "nationwide effort to improve communications within families about the subject of death."

The Federal Trade Commission (FTC) last month proposed a trade regulation to "prohibit various exploitative, unfair and deceptive practices by the nation's 22,000 funeral homes."

The legislature has corrected most of Oklahoma's laws that formerly taxed big chunks out of estates left to widows and orphans, but the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) still is watching for deaths in order to collect taxes that may take a third of estates as small as \$100,000 and run as much as 80 per cent on big ones.

You not only can't take your wealth with you, but under the Internal Revenue Code, you can't leave much of it behind for your family to use, either.

However, it is the matter of bureaucratic intrusion into family affairs at the time of death that would be more likely to stir up resentment among most people.

NIMH brought together mental health professionals and communications specialists in a conference on death in Maryland recently. Discussion began with talks about parents' communications with their children about death, and where it will end, nobody knows, because the NIMH program also includes communications in "the area of death, dying and grief."

The NIMH report says the two-and-a-half day conference was attended by "professionals representing a number of mental health disciplines and by communications experts including representatives from such popular children's television shows as 'Mr. Rogers Neighborhood' and 'The Electric Company'."

NIMH also announced that it has

contracted with the National Foundation for Sudden Infant Death (NFSID) to develop a community management system to help families who have lost a child to SIDS (Sudden Infant Death Syndrome, also known as Crib Death) cope with grief and guilt, which parents sometimes suffer.

If these programs materialize as the social reformers plan, Americans will have federal agencies to help them before, during and after their times of grief. The often ridiculed government from the cradle to the grave is much nearer to reality than most Americans want it to be, or will admit it is.