

# **MEMORIAL SOCIETIES**

**. . . the sinister aspects of  
certain funeral associations  
advocating fast disposal.**



One of the most important domestic issues in America today is the contrived controversy surrounding the funeral industry.

While the name JESSICA MITFORD has become known to almost all Americans since the publication of her book, *The American Way of Death*, few people realize the sinister purpose behind her bold and widely press-agented attack on "the gentlemen in the long black coats": America's undertakers. And few realize that Jessica Mitford and her husband have both been identified in sworn testimony before committees of the United States government as members of the Communist Party.

Closely connected with the general press attack on funeral directors is a carefully coordinated economic attack against funeral homes, casket makers, monument companies, florists and cemeteries. This is being conducted by more than 100 outfits called "memorial societies", which are closely affiliated with and provide reciprocal services for one another. They operate in most of America's larger cities. The largest memorial society, Bay Area Funeral Society, is under the guiding hand of Jessica Mitford's husband, attorney ROBERT TREUHAFT.

These tax-free co-ops function as go-betweens which, for a fee, direct patronage away from traditional burial services to fast-disposal crematoria (or sometimes to friendly or cut-rate funeral directors) of their own choosing. In general, they oppose ground burial, embalming, the use of caskets, monuments and flowers. They suggest simplified rites called "memorial services" (to occur after cremation) or no rites at all.

Their appeal to the public may be made through newspaper advertisements or by direct mail. They may or may not be listed in the telephone directory. To avoid the possibility of your joining such an organization without fully understanding its structure and aims, we have prepared this tract, which presents the inside story of the so-called "better way". Read these comments carefully. Discuss them with your friends.

#### Origin of the Attack

Memorial associations were incorporated as early as January 31, 1939. These groups were organized as co-operatives for "educational" purposes. Their stated aim was to change America's funeral customs. Their program would remove sentiment and religious significance and destroy family ties under the pretense of simplifying burial. These changes parallel the changes which have taken place in all Communist countries under state dictatorship. Such early efforts bogged down because the vast number of projects of the Communist Party prevented members and sympathizers from giving the program priority.

#### Ownership

With the future promising the eventual control of municipal governments by the federal government through

urban renewal, changes in law, redistricting and city manager programs intended to convert cities into soviets (that is, units of the central government), these co-ops are attempting to put through legislation which will bring about city-owned (later state-controlled) crematoria, such as those now operating in Moscow.

#### Communist Support

Proof of Communist involvement is gained by studying the incorporators of these memorial societies. For example, the Bay Area Funeral Society includes among its incorporators, not only identified Communist, Robert Treuhaft, Jessica Mitford's husband, but others long known to be in sympathy with Party objectives. This society and many others with Communists and Communist fronters among their officers are all listed together as members of the Continental Association of Funeral and Memorial Societies, the mother organization in Chicago.

#### Propaganda and Conditioning

These co-ops have received millions of dollars worth of free advertising in the public press through newspapers and large circulation magazines such as *Good Housekeeping*, *Atlantic*, *Life* and *Readers Digest*, which not only popularize Jessica Mitford and her book, but applaud the "better way" offered by memorial societies. This propaganda orbits around two allegations: that modern funerals are too expensive, and that viewing the remains is barbaric and materialistic. By harping on these two pitches, memorial societies have gained enormous memberships in some cities, usually charging a \$10 fee for directing your business to their selected operator.

#### Membership Irrevocable

In the "fine print" of membership forms, we learn that application for membership is often an irrevocable contract for cremation and that no membership fees will be refunded. Such stipulations could have serious legal complications when a family is enrolled, some of whom may not wish to be cremated through the channels provided by the memorial society.

#### Advertising

The theme is the same in all memorial society promotions. They repeat such terms as "rational disposition of the dead, simplified, mature, economical, wholesome, sensible, dignified". The implication is that if you support the traditional methods you are irrational, immature, unwholesome, foolish and a victim of price gouging. The fact that, whether you go through a co-op or not, you get the same price for the same service is never mentioned.

#### Lobbying

The co-operators allege that the funeral directors run a large lobbying program. This is untrue. Actually, the co-ops maintain liaison with legislators and have a complete program of recommended legislation issued by the law office of Robert Treuhaft, which is being introduced into state assemblies. The "cry thief"

approach puts the funeral industry on the defensive so that instead of organizing a counter-lobby, as they must do to survive, they are busy denying that they attempt to promote legislation favorable to their own (and America's) interests.

#### Diversion of Funds

Memorial societies and a smaller group of funeral, casket, contract burial, cold storage and store association funeral department co-ops have an advantage over privately owned operations in that they pay no taxes, are promoted by every vehicle of the left-wing propaganda machine, both printed and verbal, receive substantial postal privileges and other benefits which accrue to non-profit organizations. In return, they divert funds normally allotted for burial costs or flowers to friendly "charities" by naming these in obituaries ("instead of flowers, deceased prefers that you send a contribution to . . ."). The survivors, who may feel guilty because of the cheapness of the funeral arrangement, are sitting ducks for exploitation of this kind; may even agree to donate the money saved by fast disposal to any outfit the memorial society may suggest. Members are also encouraged to leave their bodies to science or to permit some other "practical" arrangement, from which the co-op or some other left-controlled enterprise may receive additional monies.

#### Society Members - the Forgotten Men

Once a member is hooked, he undergoes transformation from a wholesome, mature and rational prospect to expendable and disposable matter. Upon death, depending on the financial soundness of the co-op or private operator who holds the Society contract, he may be picked up, placed in a cardboard carton, carried to the crematorium in the back of a station wagon and forthrightly disposed of without even token participation of his family. Chances are, the family will not even get the ashes, unless by their special request.

#### If You Are Contacted

If an organization contacts you with a program similar to what is here described, or if you have special information relative to abuses in the fast-disposal field, please communicate with *American Intelligence Service*, South 151 Washington, Spokane, Washington 99204. American Intelligence Service is a non-governmental research service in the field of internal security, organized to meet the needs of all types of private industry. It is directed by Mr. A. F. Canwell, former chairman of the Washington State Legislature's Committee on Un-American Activities. An assortment of additional pamphlets and brochures are available on this subject from AIS, and we invite you to write for a price list.

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