crease, or taxes . . . must increase, *or the human life span must be held constant by government policy*."[6]

While public awareness of life extension research is indeed greater than a few years ago, considerable danger lies coiled in this political fact: There is no life extension special interest group even close to the size of other major political lobbies. Politically, this makes it possible for government agencies to, in a host of ways (such as FDA prohibition of free choice in use of potentially life-extending drugs), erode, inhibit, and block efforts of individuals and private organizations and firms to pursue a *free market* in life extension fields.

## Statist Attack

This interventionism in the life extension market should surprise no one, for as Ludwig von Mises pointed out long ago, major bureaucracies are *by their nature* hostile to the free market. Opposition to a free market in human longevity is merely the latest in a long line of statist attacks on *all* market freedoms.

In order to thwart these attacks, a foremost requirement is for economists to speak out and present the case for the economic benefits of longer lifespans. Not nearly enough has been done, primarily because for many years, until our bureaucracies started to "overload" the economy, almost everyone assumed that longer life was a good thing. Most people still do and it is a tribute to the basic American sense of life and self-improvement. But now the economic attack—a *statist* attack, antithetical to those basic American values—has begun and it must be countered forcefully and lucidly.

Here are some starting points for those who wish to enter the battle:

(1) The freedom to choose and pay for life extending innovations and information derives from man's most basic right—the right to life. If he does not have the freedom to pursue the preservation and betterment of his life, then the right to life loses the anchor of reality. This means that the life-extension market must be completely deregulated. It means government must contract, not expand, its control over all fields affecting the right of individuals to make life-extending market choices. Consumers must be free to decide for themselves what medicines, drugs, vitamins, surgical procedures, research, and information will best benefit them—as long as they are willing to pay for them, as all consumers must in a truly free market.

(2) Producers of life-extending products and services should be freed to offer them in an unfettered marketplace. Quality control to protect consumers could be better handled by private evaluative groups such as Underwriters Laboratories, Consumer Reports, Standard and Poor's, and many insurance firms now do to assure high quality in various other market areas. There is no honest market need for government agencies such as the FDA, hospital-oversight boards, genetic research standards boards, quasi-governmental medical examining boards, or any of the myriad of coercive agencies which now exist for the alleged purpose of protecting consumers from the products and services affecting individual health—and lifespans. As has been well-established elsewhere, such oversight agencies end up restricting consumer choices—which means, they end up also restricting the ability of consumers to take steps which would enhance their physiological well-being and enable them to live longer. In short, heavily-regulated markets chop off the good with the bad.

(3) Extended lifespans also extend productive years. This is an important economic point. People these days are not only living longer, they are living in better health. Thus, a greater proportion of a person's years can be devoted to supporting his *own* life—which means a smaller proportion of his years will require the aid of others, including the aid of tax-supported bureaucrats. On the face of it, this should demonstrate that extending lifespans of individuals also enhances the life and health of the entire economy. With more people relying longer on their own productive efforts, there is less drag on the economy. Especially noteworthy is that longer lived people have more time to plan and prepare for their own retirements. An extended working life enables them to save and invest more money to be used when they finally step out of the work force in their less able years.

This is more true the freer the economy we develop, the fewer the arbitrary restrictions on retirement and the fewer the government programs we institute restricting people during their productive years. As things stand, government constrains the free market of labor by various legal ceilings on the working age.

Artificially low benefit-qualification ages also provide artificial incentives for the elderly to quit working earlier than they otherwise would and live at the expense of others—including other productive elderly people! The principle that welfare encourages more people to join the welfare roles applies as much to the elderly as it does to the poor.

Ideally, from a market perspective, mandated retirement ages should be completely done away with and welfare for the elderly should be phased out and replaced by private market alternatives—such as the many excellent plans which free market economists have developed to equitably phase out the Social Security System.