I am horrified by Margo Macdonald’s ELA Bill. It is well-intentioned but ill-advised and fraught with problems. Hard cases make bad law. For every one of these unfortunate people there are many thousands of less visible people who would be seriously threatened by this bill.

I have a friend with MS who wants me to take her to Switzerland to die. She is 37, single, has no family support, and now cannot walk. She cannot afford the contribution of several thousand pounds she would have to make to adapt her house to make it wheelchair friendly. South Lanarkshire Council have failed to provide a proper care service. Currently she has no carers at all and has to empty her own commode. This council is notorious for its poor care services and has been featured in a TV documentary. About three years ago they sold their care services in an on-line auction to the companies bidding the lowest rate per hour, and failed to make proper checks on the companies who were given contracts. The carers are untrained and paid little more than the minimum wage. And because insufficient staff are employed by the agencies they are unable to guarantee that only a small number of carers will attend a particular person.

I am confident that if a proper care service was provided, my friend would not want to end her life. In Terry Pratchett’s recent lecture making the case for voluntary euthanasia, one of his arguments was that care is now too expensive. This is a dangerous route to go down, but very attractive to cash-strapped councils. We currently have probably the best palliative care in the world. The Netherlands’ palliative care provision is nowhere near as good. Voluntary euthanasia is too convenient, and it is not possible to provide adequate safeguards.

Anonymous
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