End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Alan Dunnett

I write to express my concern over various issues in this Bill. There are more than I mention here but these I would ask you to take into account.

If passed unamended members of the medical profession would have no freedom to opt out of giving assistance even though they might not approve of it. At present professional medical bodies and the BMA do not support assisted suicide. This is likely to affect a considerable number of people in the medical profession.

If passed unamended there would be too loose terminology to allow either certainty in some cases or restrictions on what methods could be used to terminate a life. What for instance does 'intolerable' mean?

If passed the value of some lives will be reduced. While the quality of life may be diminished in certain situations the value of any life does not diminish. The Act would then downgrade various lives to those which were expendable. The very idea raises recollections of Nazi Death camps at its extreme. At best however it would still say to some that they no longer mattered and I am sure that is not the Bill's intention.

I do not doubt that Margo Macdonald has brought this forward with the best of intentions and that she would not want uncertainty or undue pressure put on any person. My concern is that should the Bill be passed and then reviewed in some years time, and it would be great if Margo were able to do the reviewing, that the comment is made akin to that by Sir David Steel in 1997 regarding the Abortion Bill he piloted through Parliament as below:

- David Steel, the architect of the 1967 Act, said that abortions were being used as a form of contraception; he admitted that he had never anticipated "anything like" the current number of terminations when leading the campaign for reform.

  From the Scottish Parliamentary reports in Nov 2007

We should be careful not to open a door that can not be controlled, much less closed again. I hope you will find these constructive comments for your deliberations.

Alan Dunnett
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