End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Dr Clare McGraw

The End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill 2010 is full of ambiguities and is wide open for abuse. In fact, it is impossible to prevent abuses of euthanasia law from happening as evidenced from the situation in the Netherlands and Oregon. It is inevitable that voluntary euthanasia slides into involuntary euthanasia; even if only because those who see themselves as a burden feel obliged to ask for a death that they don’t really want. The Scottish Bill makes anyone who is in any way dependant a possible victim of euthanasia, and this includes those with relatively common conditions such as insulin-dependent diabetes, heart or lung disease. People with non-life threatening disabilities would also come within its scope. Remaining alive will become for these people a choice that they have to justify instead of the natural position that they are in.

In passing the Bill, Scotland would be telling it’s vulnerable people that they are possible candidates for euthanasia; that their dependency makes their lives not as worth living as the lives of the rest of ours. A society that sends out this message and has ceased to look after its most vulnerable members is no longer civilised. This surely can’t be the way forward for Scotland.

This kind of legislation has already been before the Scottish Parliament twice and has been rejected. The pro-euthanasia lobby have been relentless in their bid to legalize assisted suicide and it’s only by showing continued opposition to their plans and support for good palliative care that the Scottish public will be able to continue to protect vulnerable people and to respect life right up until its natural end.

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