End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Tom McInally

As you are fully aware this is a very sensitive issue. One cannot but be sympathetic to those of our fellow citizens who feel that they want to be in control of their own end of life. Our laws have always been sympathetic to those who through desperation or despair have taken their own lives and have begged their families to assist them. In each case the law has been required to judge whether the wishes of the suicide have been respected. What is now being proposed is that it is assumed that the assistors of suicides have been acting entirely in the interests of their relatives. I wish that this could be viewed as the universal attitude.

I was angered but not surprised recently when a candidate for a position in the Westminster parliament described old people as “coffin dodgers”. There is no longer any respect for people who have served their country well and paid their taxes. It now seems that all that is required is that we are no longer a burden on our families. My family will support me. How many of my contemporaries can have that comfort? Nearly fifty years ago our country’s politicians voted to introduce abortion – a proposal which had not been included in any party’s manifesto. The arguments at the time said that it would only apply to a few exceptional cases – rapes, incest, birth abnormalities etc. Experience has shown that it has been inflicted on millions for no other reason than they were inconvenient to their families. Please do not introduce a law which says that old people can be pressured into acquiescence to their own eradication.

In an ideal world a change in the law to give peace of mind to those placed in such a difficult position should be welcomed, but this is not an ideal world and I feel that the consolation given would be at the price of putting many of our older and vulnerable citizens under an intolerable pressure. Please view your first responsibility to be to our vulnerable – and usually oldest citizens. Those who have their family to protect them do not require your involvement. It is those who have no one to protect them that need your help. Please do not let them down. The obnoxious individual who called us “coffin dodgers” may have older relatives. If he does not then, be assured, others with the same attitude do.

Tom McInally
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