End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Anne McIntyre

I am very thankful to have this opportunity to write to you to comment on the proposed -ELA Bill.

I wish to record my absolute opposition to this Bill. To encourage someone to take their life or make a loved one feel guilty at not assisting someone close to them to die, is an intolerable burden and is a dreadful indictment on any civilised society.

The example I would look to is the difference between the 1967 Abortion Bill - the conditions that were so tightly framed to start with and now 43 years later we have the blood of over 6 million lives on our hands, and innocent lives, knowingly conceived can be 'killed' with a morning after pill.

Having pursued this line before the very birth of a child do we now want to have a similar record at the end of life? Will a right to die become a duty to die? I believe it will also encourage, disabled, depressed, people who feel life has become 'intolerable' for them to ask to die.

I would ask that the standard aimed for would be, hospices with palliative care used as a model for excellent treatment and pain management with loving care to the sick and elderly. However, the challenge with that proposal is that if the Government intervened, staff would need to be taught new skills. The key element that makes them such special places, is the ethos they are built on and staff employed have the compassion of Christ and Christian values. My brother died recently in the Inverness Hospice with all of the above care - pain management, loving and compassionate staff, lovely comfortable surrounding.

Another personal story. I have just this past week buried a very dear friend, who was like a second mother to me. She had food and drink withdrawn from her two years ago at Falkirk Royal Infirmary for about 7 days, as she supposedly was unable to swallow. Her daughter and myself were simply waiting at her bedside - until a bright young Junior Doctor came into the room, checked all the records and ordered - tests and xrays to be carried out. Food and drink were restored and so was our dear Rhona. We have had two precious years with her until she literally slept away having had a very good day, lucid and chatting and fell 'asleep' after tea. A perfect ending at 95. Had she been allowed, or assisted to die two years earlier, it would have been devastating for many members of the family and they would have been deprived of two years of special memories. My other real concern is the mental health problems that could arise of those who helped a loved one to die - and could not live with the guilt of that action.

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