End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Andrew Fraser

Having read through the above Bill and the Policy Memorandum and Explanatory Notes, I should like to express my concern about the Bill.

The name of the Bill is grossly misleading in that it takes what would normally be understood as something positive, the provision of palliative and other care over the whole spectrum of human need, and makes it mean assisted suicide or euthanasia.

The Bill purportedly deals with "assistance" but it also would involve "administration of appropriate means" (2). That means deliberate killing.

The "designated practitioner" who must be a registered medical practitioner must be at the final "assistance" and may be the person giving the "assistance" whether "providing" it or "administering" it.

The Policy Memorandum states that any medical practitioner who was totally against being involved in assisting the death of or actually killing another individual, when asked by one of their patients to assist them in dying, cannot refuse to be involved but must refer that patient to a doctor who will. This is morally intolerable and perverse to compel someone dedicated to the saving of life to be involved in taking life.

The eligibility requirements set the lower age at 16. This is far too young for a person to be making such serious decisions. (2) fails to take into account that no doctor can be precise as to length of time left to a terminally ill person. The time may be much shorter or the person may live for longer or even experience remission.

5(2)(a) would be difficult to police and would depend on the integrity of the doctor. What if they were someone like Harold Shipman? 5(2)(b) is terrible - reasonable fees for taking another person's life!

In 7(1)(d) and 10(1)(d) the means are not specified and 11 states that the agreed means must be provided "so far as reasonably practicable" This could lead to any method being used.

The Bill is full of vague definitions and would, therefore be unsafe as legislation.

Over and above all this, it is not right that any individual should implicate others in the ending of their life. This is a terrible thing to do to another person - make them responsible for your death.

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