End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Dr Peter MacConnell

I write to state how firmly I believe that the passing of the End of Life Assistance (Scotland) bill will be detrimental to the well-being of our country. This will attack the fundamental right to human life in our country since it will:

(a) damage the bond of trust between patient and doctor.

Speaking as a patient who has recently spent a period of 8 weeks in hospital I can attest to how vulnerable and deflated one can be when seriously ill. In such a position one is very dependent on the care and advice of the medical staff. To interfere with this relationship is of great damage to vulnerable ill and elderly people in our society

(b) damage the dignity of our old people and the esteem in which our society holds them (which at times seems fragile enough)

We keep on hearing in elections politicians banging on about what their party will do for pensioners. Now we seem to hear the political liberal elite saying that there will come a time in their life when pensioners (being elderly and getting ill) may consider it better to end it all. This is no message of concern for their welfare but smacks of branding people as worthless

(c) put further pressure on our elderly who often feel worthless and a burden on their families as their bodies get frail and they rely on their families and the health service for help which is often costly. It is no fun being dependent on others and less if the help is grudged. This bill offers an easy, quick option which a vulnerable person in a low frame of mind after several years of being housebound might think would take the weight off everyone else.

(d) lessen the integrity of our medical and nursing professions. People join these professions hopefully with the intention of helping people and caring for them. To reduce them to legalised killers is to diminish their calling.

This bill may be well-intentioned as we all know loved ones that we have seen suffer. But in their lives and in their deaths they had the dignity of their human condition. This country has already been distorted by an abortion bill that was aimed at stopping the tragedy of back-street abortions but has now become reduced to abortion on demand being used as a lazy man’s contraceptive. The Netherlands from a similar start to assisted dying has seen a huge rise in euthanasia deaths and these are only the ones that are reported.

If our lifes are to have dignity then we must be prepared to spend the time, care and money to make them dignified. This means treating our sick and elderly with the care and respect they are due and not going down the road of treating them as expendable and costly burdens.
I entreat you to oppose the passing of this or any other assisted dying bill.

Dr Peter MacConnell
11 May 2010