End of Life Assistance (Scotland) Bill

Anne Flynn

I am writing to express my concerns about your End of life Assistance (Scotland) Bill. I am very worried that this Bill could put many sick or disabled people at risk and I would be ashamed if this Bill came to pass during my lifetime. There have been so many elderly and physically weak people in my life who have yet been a great source of strength and wisdom. It would be dreadful if these unsung heroes amongst us should start to feel a burden to our society. Each person has, I believe, their own unique contribution to make: “the life of each of us has its effect on us all” as St Paul once wrote. I am very uneasy at the prospect of trying to measure the value of a human person at one particular point in their life –who can make that judgement? How can we know that a few days later our (subjective) view might be very different? Who is to say whether if we had the same debilitating condition that we consider too much for someone else to bear, we might see differently if it were to happen to us?

There are, of course, countless questions like these which your Bill raises in the minds of many of us. I am troubled that many could be vulnerable- not everyone has relatives who are altruistic and not looking for self-gain in advising them to consider ending their life before natural death. Some people that we know with depression can more quickly feel so rejected by society that they might think that suicide is an easy way out- and these can be young people, with their lives ahead of them, or mums and dads with young families. Why speak of suicide as something positive at all? How can it be good to take a life—even if it is your own?

On a different note, I am proud of the wonderful work that goes on in Hospices and homes throughout our country of Scotland, and this work of palliative care has gone on for many years. The kindness and compassion of those who work there, can, I think, challenge all of us to get better at putting others first, to give without the need to receive something back as an emotional reward. For me, as a mother, this is especially true. It inspires me that whilst I am at home loving my children, there are people out there caring for the sick and the dying, in this beautiful way of loving. Our society would be deeply impoverished if we were to lose not only these hospices, but the understanding of what they represent-what it means to stand shoulder to shoulder with someone in their pain, or to hold their hand.

I ask that you do not allow to this Bill to proceed. Of the good intentions of Margo McDonald I have no doubt, but she must see that what is proposed cannot be controlled properly and I fear could be a downward turn for our country. I’m sure that you like me had a sense of pride mingled with a smile when at our airport, of all the airports in the world, one brave ordinary worker when faced with a suicide bomber acted instinctively as if to say: "Not on my patch!" Such was the innate desire of one John Smeaton to defend life and his country. Wouldn’t be terrible thing that after the world was astonished at
how this little country of ours stood up to a terrorism that great nations fear, we should then legalise the killing of our own kith and kin by the hand of those seen as healers.

Thank you for reading my letter. I am grateful for the chance to participate in this consultation. Please be assured of my genuine concern and appreciation of your attention.

Anne Flynn
12 May 2010