My interest in this is largely personal as one who is in his eighth decade of life and has witnessed the sad deterioration of a number of his elders in their general competence and their apparent pleasure in living.

While at present I am fortunate enough to be free of any condition with such effects, I feel strongly that the foreseeable end of my own life and that of my family members should be not be spent in a state of prolonged and abject misery where we have a settled and clear-minded will to be done with it. The existence of a professional and legally structured approach that permits a suffering individual to be helped in taking a responsible part in the end of his or her own life could, I submit, be a considerable comfort to many of us. It appears to be almost a matter of cruelty and a denial of human rights to insist on the legal thwarting of what can be a rational decision.

Taking in turn the points which we are asked to address, I would note the following:

I do agree, as would follow from my comments above, that a request for end of life assistance from a registered medical practitioner should be legally acceptable and capable of being put into practice;

The requirements for age and Scottish connection appear satisfactory;

I am content with the two categories of people who would qualify for assistance in the terms of the Bill, but would add a third (notwithstanding the complexities involved) – this would be of people who have an early-stage diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease, and who while still for the time being of “sound mind” have made a living will in the light of their diagnosis in which they call for an assisted end of life at a due stage before undignified helplessness overtakes them;

I am satisfied that the carefully staged process that is set out in the Bill appears to contain the necessary safeguards against the abuses that can be cited against any change in the law in this area;

The level and nature of these safeguards appear to be appropriate, although it probably requires some experience of this easement in practice before it is possible to be entirely certain.

I should be grateful for these points to be taken into consideration.

Hubert C Macfie
23 June 2010