

THE FALCONER COMMISSION ON ASSISTED DYING

RIGHT TO LIFE INTERIM RESPONSE

SOS: The Falconer Commission on Assisted Dying published its Report just as we were in the process of sending out RTLNews 91. We therefore held up the mailing to prepare this interim response. IT IS VITAL THAT YOU WRITE TO YOUR MPs URGING THEM TO OPPOSE THE FALCONER RECOMMENDATIONS. Every point in our leaflet on "[Facts Dignity in Dying Will Not Tell You](#)" is still absolutely valid.

1. Nothing has changed. The Report repeats exactly the same claims and demands as the euthanasia lobby has been promoting for years. It is simply another step in the same campaign which has already twice lost the vote in Parliament by a substantial majority.
2. The Commission was made up of 12 people all of whom believed in euthanasia and nine of whom were widely known as campaigners. As fully expected they recommend that euthanasia must be legalised – although they are somewhat more cautious than previously. The caution – no more than the demands - is no surprise as over forty organisations (including the British Medical Association) refused to appear before them or give evidence because of their obvious bias and campaigning aims.
3. Euthanasia should only be permitted, they state, if the patient has less than 12 months to live. However, their ultimate aim can be seen by the fact that repeatedly on TV and radio, cases chosen to justify their demands were of people with long-term illnesses who would not qualify under their recommendations: cases of Motor Neurone Disease; Multiple Sclerosis; progressive supranuclear palsy (PSP) and other illnesses guaranteed to terrify people. The fact that it is almost impossible for doctors to predict the length of life for any patient – is totally ignored. The case of the Lockerbie bomber – Al Megrahi – is a prime example.
4. They promise strict 'safeguards', while avoiding details of what these would be. Strict 'safeguards' are claimed in all places with legalised euthanasia. Yet, they have failed to protect the vulnerable in places such as Holland where around 1,000 of the 4,000 people undergoing euthanasia each year have never asked for it. Lord Falconer actually admits that his proposals are risky and that no system of assisted dying could be "completely watertight." There is nothing to safeguard the vulnerable against the Baroness Warnock demand that the incurably sick have "a duty to die".
5. For anyone who doubts the ultimate aims of the Commission, the Rev. George Pitcher in his Daily Mail blog urges them: "(to) look at the evidence presented ...by one Joyce Robins,a 'co-director of patient concern'. She told (Falconer): 'I think we can only go for terminal illness at the moment, so this doesn't actually apply to the people who are probably about to go into care homes. But, you know, baby steps.'"
6. He also lets the cat out of the bag by the manner in which he presents the evidence (as though it were Holy Gospel) from Holland, Oregon and elsewhere with legalised euthanasia. Time and again doctors from these regions insist that they have virtually no evidence of patients being coerced. Yet, every UK human rights disability group opposes assisted dying partly because of the experiences of their members actually being coerced into actions or treatments which they consider are against their own good.
7. Another example of his intentions relates to the Report's requirement that Doctors must be allowed a conscience clause. However, the Report states that those doctors refusing to do the deed would be duty bound to refer patients to a doctor who would. In other words all doctors would be duty bound to take part in euthanasia programmes directly or indirectly. This also makes it quite obvious that, as in Oregon, citizens of the UK would be able to "shop around" for doctors willing to kill off patients.
8. Lack of Hospice facilities in Holland, Oregon and elsewhere are scandalous whereas those in the UK are second to none. Even so, our services are still patchy and need to be greatly extended. 96 per cent of Hospice Doctors are totally opposed to "assisted dying". They need to be provided with the materials to extend their work so that more and more people in the UK are given the necessary expertise and care to allow them not only to "die peacefully but also to live until they die" - the principle on which the hospice movement is based.

Right To Life, PO Box 26264, W3 9WF. Telephone 020 8992 7657 Fax 020 8896 1859

Email: phyllis@righttolife.org.uk

Website: www.righttolife.org.uk