



Euthanasia? How can a secular society claim anyone is “better off dead”?

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OTTAWA, Ontario, October 31, 2006 (LifeSiteNews.com) - The growing push for euthanasia and assisted suicide in Canada threatens the foundations of the country, said B.C. palliative care expert Dr. Margaret Cottle, replacing genuine compassion with an easy reliance on “rights.”

“The concept of medical killing is predicated on the assumption that death is better,” Dr. Cottle pointed out in a presentation to Members of Parliament in Ottawa last Thursday. “Yet there is not one shred of evidence that people are better off dead. Show me the evidence that the person is better off dead, that the quality of life is going to be better.”

“Even people who don’t believe in heaven or an afterlife claim death brings peace—well, the onus is on those seeking change to prove the benefits of the change. How can a secular society claim that people are ‘better off dead’?”

In fact, Dr. Cottle cited recent quality-of-life studies that found people in palliative care often reported greater satisfaction with their quality of life than people in full health at the height of their careers.

“People in palliative care experience less gap between goals and reality in life quality because their values become simpler and more attainable.”

“Autonomy rights” of the patient trump all other considerations in end-of-life decision-making in the medical community, Dr. Cottle said, with patients taking a disproportionate role of authority in the process. Assisted suicide is defended on the grounds that, without it, the human right of autonomy would be denied.

“Autonomy is an illusion,” Dr. Cottle said. “We are connected to one another. We have lots of restrictions on our autonomy that we consider perfectly reasonable for civilized society.”

When applied to end-of-life decisions, radical patient autonomy carries with it a burden of requirement on those who will be forced to carry out the patient’s wishes. Patient “autonomy” that seeks assisted suicide demands the participation of a physician.

While human rights are important and necessary, Dr. Cottle stated, the deeper issue surrounding end-of-life questions is that of society's ability and willingness to care for those in need.

"It's about our personal suffering and how we deal with it. Rights come in when unconditional love fails—we need them, but we need to admit that rights are a failure of love, a stop-gap measure."

"Altruism and compassion are the core elements of Canada. If those values are going to retain any significance, we need to support them. The very fabric of our society is at stake."

"There are lessons for us to learn as a culture, What are we going to feel about ourselves, what is going to happen to our identity if we fail to protect the most vulnerable and weakest in our society?"

The euthanasia information session for Ottawa MP's was a joint effort by the Institute for Marriage and Family Canada, the Euthanasia Prevention Coalition and Action Life Ottawa.

Dr. Cottle joined euthanasia opponent Bobby Schindler in a presentation urging Canadian politicians to support programs that offer quality assistance to the disabled and their families, and to oppose legalized assisted suicide and euthanasia.