

National Affairs by Claire Hoy ? It's only life we're talking about

Here's a terrible thought.

If the anxious-to-kill brigade had its way, and the proposed Liberal state-killing bill covered more circumstances than it will, wouldn't all those distressed young people on the Attawapiskat reserve who signed a death pact have a ?right? to summon the nearest doctor to end their misery?

Ridiculous, you say.

Not really. Not if you've been following the flak the Liberals are getting ? not because it calls on doctors to deliberately end lives rather than save them, but because, to many, the so-called ?assisted-death? bill doesn't go far enough.

The law, which is sure to pass, isn't ?doctor-assisted suicide.? Doctors won't be assisting, they'll be doing the actual killing.

Yes, yes, I know. The Liberals have no choice. After all, the most politically active Supreme Court in Canadian history is forcing them to act, a court which just a few years ago came to the opposite conclusion on this issue but, while the legal arguments remained unchanged the ideological makeup of the court didn't, and so these unelected gods have once again thumbed their collective nose at our elected representatives.

Mind you, the government could invoke the notwithstanding clause and hold off the court edict ? and ? here's a wild thought ? could actually conduct a referendum to see if people want the state killing off people. But, alas, it's far easier to hide behind the robes of the Supremes and do their bidding.

It is not all that surprising that a country ? Canada, that is ? which boasts of being alone in the democratic world in lacking a single law restricting abortion, should now be so readily prepared to demonstrate its lack of respect for life by bringing in the death bill.

We're okay, it seems, killing the unborn and the infirm, but we go to the barricades to stop the state from killing murderers.

Anyway, giving sick people the needle is a lot cheaper than investing in palliative care, which is what a responsible society would be doing instead.

In the Commons last week, responding to attacks that the bill doesn't go far enough, Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould, said there ?will always be a diversity of opinion about what is required to respond to a particular judgment, but it falls to Parliament not only to respect the court's decision but also listen to the diverse voices and decide what the public interest demands.?

Well, up to a point. Certainly they're not listening to the millions of Canadians who are appalled at the very notion of a so-called assisted-suicide bill.

People will say that the bill is needed because even if you don't want to invoke its measures, they have a ?right to die with dignity.?

You should let them in on a little secret: they already have the right to die. If you want to kill yourself, well, that's a pity, but there's nothing stopping you.

This bill isn't about your right to die. It's about a perceived ?right? to make a doctor kill you upon request. To be sure, some doctors will gladly oblige ? regardless of the oath they took to save lives ? but others won't. To those, even the Supremes suggested they shouldn't be forced to jab the needle in your arm, but what the political response to that is that well, yes, they shouldn't have to do it, but they must refer you to somebody who will. Kind of like refusing to rob the bank but being forced to drive the getaway car instead. It's still wrong.

Now, back to the kids at Attawapiskat.

You may recall that the all-party committee studying the proposals and reporting back, actually suggested that among those who should be eligible for state killing procedures are certain youths among us. No doubt they would be horrified at the notion that this may include those troubled native kids on the reserve, but that's what happens when you go beyond the high-sounding rhetoric and apply it to real life situations.

And while the Liberals may pretend their law is restrictive, if it's like every similar law around the world (and you can count on it) it a)- won't be that restrictive in practice, and b)- will get less restrictive with each passing year.

In Belgium, for example, there were strict rules in the beginning, but now even kids and people who are simply depressed or are tired of life can have the state needle administered.

Advocates point to Oregon's law to argue that not many people will take advantage of it anyway ? as if those that do don't matter ? but without telling you that Oregon's numbers are so low because the cause of death is usually attributed to a specific ailment you had rather than to assisted suicide itself. It's a fraud, but hey, it's only life we're talking about.

