

# A dignified debate

This newspaper may be opposed to Lord Falconer's Bill to legalise assisted dying, but it is still right for our lawmakers to debate this most difficult and complex of issues. And on that score, yesterday's discussion in the House of Lords was an example of Parliament at its finest. There were no wrecking amendments, no attempts at filibustering, no partisanship, no personal attacks. Instead, peers spoke candidly, from the heart. Lord Carey, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, who surprised everyone when he turned from an opponent into a supporter of the legalisation, told the House of a woman he knew who had been arrested for reluctantly helping a friend to die. "Being a Christian," he insisted, "is quite compatible with supporting this Bill."

Lord Tebbit, whose wife was left disabled by an IRA bomb, argued the contrary: there would be, he said, "great pressure on the elderly, the sick and the disabled to... cease to be a burden on others". But perhaps the most affecting contribution was made by Baroness Campbell of Surbiton, who suffers from severe spinal muscular atrophy and spoke through a ventilator. She said that her own struggle convinced her that every circumstance could be treated and hope should never be abandoned: "Death is seen as a release from pity for both giver and receiver, but there are far better ways of responding." Let us hope the country was listening.

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