

Assisted Dying Bill rejected by Commons

MPS HAVE voted to reject the Assisted Dying Bill introduced by Labour MP Rob Marris.

The vote last Friday, which came after almost five hours of impassioned debate on both sides, resulted in 330 against the Bill and 118 in favour, a majority of 212.

The Bill was based on Lord Falconer's Bill which ran out of time in the House of Lords before the general election.

It would have allowed people with fewer than six months to live to be prescribed a lethal dose of drugs; they would have had to be capable of taking these themselves. Every case would have had to have been approved by two doctors and a High Court judge.

When the issue was debated in Parliament in 1997 assisted suicide was rejected by 234 to 89. In a statement Archbishop Peter Smith of Southwark, the chairman of the bishops' department of Christian responsibility and citizenship, said he now hoped that "excellent practice in palliative care" would become a focus of political action.

He said: "I welcome Parliament's recognition of the grave



Protesters against assisted suicide gather outside the House of Commons last Friday

risks that this Bill posed to the lives of our society's most vulnerable people. There is much excellent practice in palliative care which we need to celebrate and promote, and I hope now the debate on assisted suicide is behind us, that this

will become a focus for political action.

"I am encouraged by the participation of so many Catholics throughout England and Wales in this important discussion and hope that everyone involved will continue to

support calls for better quality care as life nears its end."

Speaking against the Bill, Catholic MP Rob Flello said an assisted death was not quick or dignified. After taking a dose of lethal barbiturates, he said, on average it takes one hour to die.