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THE ANTI DISCRIMINATION BILL

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"The Protestant Faith"

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The Anti-Discrimination Bill which is now being considered by Parliament imposes severe restrictions of freedom of action. Some of these restrictions we would all approve, for example, the Bill prohibits discrimination on the basis of race. Everybody whatever their race must be treated equally and there are severe penalties for any act of discrimination. In the same way the Bill requires that men and women must be treated alike and we would all agree with this.

However the Bill prohibits schools for boys or for girls. If schools are segregated according to sex it is simply because parents think that this is in the interests of their child, and yet this parental decision in the matter of the education and welfare of their child is taken away by the Bill. This is a very gross restriction of an important freedom preventing parents from doing what they believe is in the interests of their children.

The problem about the Bill is that it is not based on moral considerations but springs rather from humanistic concepts. The Bill restricts the right of acting on moral grounds, and thus it prevents like minded persons joining together to promote activities based on shared moral convictions. For example, the churches have, for centuries, conducted welfare organisations. Orphanages and children's homes, hospitals, and retirement villages are just some examples. These things will become impossible under the new Bill because the church will not be able to employ fellow Christians to staff these institutions, for the Bill compels the church to employ for example, homosexuals or atheists or people living in immoral relationships of every sort, if such people offer themselves for employment. You will see immediately how the whole christian character of these church enterprises would be destroyed by making impossible a common basis of co-operation. The Bill will change the whole nature of our community.

The Bill is called an Anti-Discrimination Bill and provides large penalties of \$20,000 for any breach of its provisions but in fact it is itself a discriminatory Bill. It discriminates against people with moral convictions, and endeavours to prevent them from acting on these convictions in the ordinary affairs of life. This is mischievous. It sets the law against moral convictions, and will lead either to *subterfuge* people pretending that the reasons for their actions are other than they are, or it will lead to *defiance* of the law by the stronger minded. It is a mischievous law.

The false basis of the Bill is shown by the fact that it has to provide so many exceptions. For example, the Bill is not to apply to licenced clubs and it does not apply to one's own home or to a service company. A Bill that needs to make important exceptions like this shows that the whole principle of the Bill is wrong. We ought to know by now that it is unwise to restrict a person from acting according to his moral convictions, even though these moral convictions may be mistaken. During the war we allowed conscientious objectors to act on their moral convictions even though these were shared by hardly anybody else in the community. But this Bill prevents Christians from acting on their moral convictions, although Christian convictions are so widespread in the community.

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Note: Since the above was broadcast the Legislative Council introduced amendments which were incorporated in the Act as passed exempting schools and some other church activities from the provisions of the Act. However, the Act as passed continues to be open to objection that it does not take into account moral convictions as a basis for action.

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