

1857-8.

VICTORIA.

PUBLIC EDUCATION BILL.

PETITION.

Ordered by the Legislative Assembly to be printed, 8th April, 1858.

TO THE HONORABLE THE SPEAKER AND MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF THE COLONY OF
VICTORIA.

The Humble Petition of the undersigned Members of the United Church of England
and Ireland, resident in Whittlesea and its vicinity :

SHEWETH—

That your Petitioners view with alarm the introduction into the Public Education Bill of the following clause :—

“That secular instruction only, in the ordinary sense of the term, shall be administered in the schools to be established under this Act, or in any of the buildings thereunto belonging.”

That this clause contains a prohibition which your Petitioners consider opposed to the principles of religious liberty, and which, if carried out, will tend to render the youth of this Colony receiving public education irreligious, and consequently immoral, and will therefore prove a source of the deepest possible injury to them and to the State at large.

That the effect of this resolution, if carried out, will be to render it almost impossible to impart religious instruction to the children attending the public schools by any means within the power of the Church.

That the duty of imparting religious instruction to the children is, in the minds of your Petitioners, and indeed in the minds of all Christians, one of paramount importance. If the Education Bill, as now altered, be passed, all those Christians who are now taking part in promoting public education will feel bound to endeavor to supply the religious instruction forbidden to be given in the public schools which are not placed under this ban, thereby producing two antagonistic systems, to avoid the evils of which is the proposed object of the Bill.

Your Petitioners earnestly pray that the resolution to prevent religious instruction being imparted in the public schools may be rescinded, as if it be adhered to your Petitioners feel that there will be no alternative for the various religious bodies, but either to leave the children of the Colony wholly without religious instruction, or to establish independent schools. If the latter are successful the public schools must fail, but if the public schools succeed they must do so by risking the eternal happiness of the children educated within them.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

(Here follow 141 signatures.)

By Authority : JOHN FERRIS, Government Printer, Melbourne.