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59. "We need a Human Rights Bill to protect our liberties."



A Human Rights Bill is something which looks plausible on the surface, but disastrous when you look deeper into it. Such a bill would be a written codification of the liberties which Parliament thinks should be enshrined into a written law. In fact most of our liberties come from conventions and assumptions added to over the centuries. Some were acquired from individual laws passed by Parliament, some arose from celebrated legal judgements which enshrined an important principle.

Any attempt to write them all down will be forced to simplify them into a manageable text. Many of them have the nuances of precedents which arose in practice and are difficult to codify. Inevitably, such a text would be given priority over the history, losing subtle threads of association in the process.

Furthermore, once the principle of a Human Rights Bill were established, every pressure group in the country would try to get their particular hobby horse through its door and admitted as a 'human right.' People would campaign to get the rights of children not to be chastised by their parents, and the right of unborn foetuses to be protected from abortion, or from mothers who drink or smoke. The right to free and equal education would be inserted to have independent schools closed down. The Bill would be an instrument to get the force of law to do things which elected Parliaments have thus far declined to do. In its drafting it would be near impossible to keep the contentious 'positive rights' separate from the negative rights which have constituted our liberties.

Parliaments have been scant respecters of those liberties in recent years, but a Human Rights Bill, far from protecting them, would open the floodgates to even more abuse and erosion of them, taking away our freedom in order to give others what some think should be their 'rights.'

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