

10 November, 1999

Mr. Lau Chin-Sak
c/o Legislative Secretariat
Hong Kong

Fax No. 2877-8024

Dear Mr. Lau,

Proposed Ban of Filipino Domestic Helpers from Driving

I was dismayed to read in the local press that the Government is considering imposing a ban on Driving Duties by Filipino residents here employed as domestic helpers but for whom driving is *incidental* to their duties.

As indicated by the use of the word "incidental", I believe that driving only occupies a small percentage of the overall duties of foreign Filipino domestic helpers and whilst creating the potential for inconvenience all round, such a measure is most unlikely to result in additional employment of locally born chauffeurs who are usually not prepared to undertake any duties other than driving. However be that as it may, the main objection to this proposal is that it unfortunately smacks of racial discrimination against a single segment of our population and as should not be introduced into Hong Kong.

The Chief Executive on taking office made it a point that he would ensure that Hong Kong would retain its international and cosmopolitan traditions and status. To introduce this legislation designed to be effective against a single group in Hong Kong is hardly in line with the Chief Executive's undertaking and will undoubtedly be the "thin edge of the wedge".

Most if not all of the Filipino domestic helpers in Hong Kong have obtained their licences in Hong Kong and are thus legally entitled to drive. Why should Filipinos legally living in Hong Kong not be able to enjoy what most people would regard as being a constitutional right, ie the right to drive? I can perhaps understand the ban if it was to apply to full-time drivers only but I believe there are very few of these and in any event, such a measure would be extremely difficult to police. Once accepted in one instance, it will not be long before pressure is applied on another. Does the Government intend to cave in each time this sort of self-interest pressure is applied and is this type of legislation that is really wanted, or indeed needed, in Hong Kong?

I understand that there is considerable amount of opposition against this measure and for myself I strongly urge that that the legislation should be reviewed and thought through very carefully not only in respect of what is intended to achieve but also the far reaching effects implicit from its introduction.

I thank you for your kind attention.

Yours sincerely,



R.I.F. Brothers