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TOPICS TALKED OF.



HERE is now before the Provincial Legislature a bill to amend the Liquor License Act by inserting provisions which will enable the saloons and hotels of the Province to keep open on Sundays, except during church hours. It is my earnest conviction that this bill will be defeated, and in this case at least the wish is father to the thought, for I can see no possible good, and a very great deal of harm, that may result from the proposed amendments. Before I go into the discussion of the pros and cons, let me say, and say most emphatically that I am not a prohibitionist, nor yet do I come under that class wherein are classed high license men. I hold the peculiar and I consider advanced opinion that all liquor manufactured should be heavily taxed by the Crown, and that once it leaves the manufacturers' hands it should be a free commodity the same as any other mercantile article. I know, dear reader, that you don't agree with me, but some of these nice summer days I will take you aside and tell you all about this theory of mine, and endeavor to convince you that I am correct. But just now I must confine my attention to the bill at present before the Legislature. In the first place, I believe in God, and I believe that according to every divine as well as to every natural teaching there should be one day of rest out of each week. In so-called Christian countries this day of rest is called Sunday, and it is now an almost universal rule that business shall be suspended. Whether you or I spend or should spend Sunday in the worship of God is at present outside the question. The principle I want to establish is that we should observe one day of rest each week, and I ask you as reasonable men and women to grant this. At any rate I assume it as the basis of my argument, and I declare it to be a logical deduction that if the grocery stores, the dry goods houses, the fac-

ories, the ship-yards, the newspaper offices, etc., are closed on Sundays, then so should be the saloons. It is argued, I know, that hotels are kept open on Sunday, that trains and steamboats and street cars are run, that firemen are on duty and policemen likewise, and that there are any number of men and women, too, who do not suspend work even one day out of the week. All this may be true enough. The institution of necessity must be kept in operation for 365 days in the year, and if there are 366 days then for the whole 366. But the saloon and the hotel bar are not places of necessity. There are a few men who need to drink on Sunday, but there are a good many men, who if the saloons were open would drink. When the saloons are closed they find the convenience removed, and they spend their time elsewhere and in other ways.

Laying aside for the moment the question of convenience, I boldly assert, and am prepared to maintain my assertion, that it is not *respectable* to keep saloons open on Sunday. If we have not all got religion, we have all got morals of one kind or another. The wretch who has no morals is ostracised from every kind of society and social life. Cannot the day set apart for rest, for recreation, for enjoyment, if you will, be kept secure from the invasion of the few who, having nothing else to do, *will* drink and *will* get drunk, and consequently noisy and offensive? It should be so, and I venture to predict it will be so.

There is also another line of argument that some use, and I confess it appeals to me. A large number of people in this, as in every other Canadian community, are church-going people, and not only do they distinctly disapprove of drinking on Sundays, but a good many of them would absolutely prohibit drinking at all. Of course I cannot agree with them in this, but these people form an influential section

of the community, and we would indeed be queer citizens if for one day in the week we could not respect their opinions and convictions. If for no other reason than because it would be *policy* the saloon-keepers themselves should close down on Sundays. As the law now stands, it inflicts no hardships, but it might be made so stringent that it would do so, and there is positively no use tempting fate.

Once more I say, and I say it in all earnestness and candor, I hope the proposed amendments will be defeated and the law will be left as it is now. To amend it so as to allow the saloons to be open on Sunday except during church hours would be to give the cue for the institution of an agitation against saloons altogether that would probably result in even a more stringent law than the present one being made.

That was an exciting scene in the Legislature a week or so ago when Hon. Mr. Beaven, leader of the Opposition, charged, or as good as charged, the Finance Minister, Hon. Mr. Turner, with having made away with some of the proceeds of the £200,000 loan placed on the English markets last year. Mr. Turner is so well able to defend himself that I am not going into any elaborate explanation of where the money went, and moreover I don't know where it went. But Mr. Turner is not the kind of a man anyone who knows him would suspect of having pocketed any cash not his own, and he is moreover to good a business man to let any one else wrongfully get away with it. With all due deference to Hon. Mr. Beaven, the insinuation was not one that will raise him any in the estimation of the people generally. It is our pride in this Western Province that our politics are pure, and as the Premier, Hon. Mr. Robson said, in his speech on the Budget, no mercy would be shewn to an offender. The present Government may not be all that it ought to be—few governments are—