

*Lord's Day Act*

bound to conform, who authorizes, directs or permits any such last mentioned employee of that corporation to carry on any part of the business of the corporation in violation of any of the provisions of this act, shall be liable, on summary conviction before two justices of the peace, to the same penalties as those to which a corporation is liable under subsection one of this section or, for a first offence, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding three months and not less than one month, with or without hard labour, and for each subsequent offence, to imprisonment for a term not exceeding six months and not less than two months, with or without hard labour.

It will not be necessary to impose the gaol sentence as this will be discretionary. Many corporations have been prosecuted repeatedly; but when that happens, there is always delay in the proceedings. They have the money to go to appeal or even to pay a fine if necessary; but quite often, during and after the proceedings, the same violations are carried on. Much repair work is done on Sundays that could well be carried on during the week. It is manifest that these corporations find it profitable to pay a fine and then continue to violate the law.

Who would object to this amendment? Corporations which are observing the law will not object. I take this opportunity to congratulate the directors of such corporations upon showing the same Christian spirit in the conduct of their business as they show in their personal and private affairs. On the other hand, can it be said that the intended amendment is too drastic? In that case the objectors would be either those who are violating the law or those who intend to violate it. In neither case, I submit, are they entitled to sympathy or consideration.

Now, let us view this matter in the light of the sanctions imposed by our laws against those who violate the commandments of the decalogue, from which our law for the observance of Sunday is derived. Most of the sections of our criminal code having their source in a moral obligation to do or not to do certain things provide for the imprisonment of those who violate the code. Here are a few examples.

"Thou shalt not kill." The violation of the section of our criminal code which is based on this commandment makes the offender liable to hanging, and, in the case of manslaughter, to imprisonment for life, and very few find fault with that penalty as being too extreme.

"Thou shalt not steal." The section of our criminal code which is based on this commandment makes the offender liable to imprisonment for a maximum of fourteen years, and I do not think the penalty is considered excessive, except perhaps by the offenders themselves.

[Mr. Brunelle.]

"Thou shalt not covet thy neighbour's wife." It might be well for me not to make any comment on this commandment, particularly in the presence of bachelor members of the house, knowing not the tree of knowledge of good and evil, and who upon hearing some suggestion of matrimonial miseries might be forever scared away from the state of marriage; so I will pass on.

Now the commandment upon which the Lord's Day Act is based reads thus: "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy." Here is a message from the Holy Book in reference to the penalty to be imposed upon those who do not observe the Sabbath day:

Six days shall work be done, but on the seventh day there shall be to you an holy day, a sabbath of rest to the Lord.

And, sir, note this:

Whosoever shall do work therein shall be put to death.

My amendment to the Lord's Day Act does not go as far as that. I want the directors of corporations to live, but should they not let others live up to their religious convictions?

I have shown, Mr. Speaker, that the Lord's Day Act is ineffective in many cases inasmuch as certain corporations find it profitable and advantageous to pay the fine and keep on violating the law. I have also shown that, relying on the unquestionable authority and wisdom of the Holy Scriptures, this house will be amply justified in making the penalty for violation of the Lord's Day Act more severe in order to give the offenders the precious advantage of repenting at leisure in gaol for a short time at least.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I make a confident appeal to the good will of every member of the house, and particularly to the high moral and Christian character of the right hon. Minister of Justice (Mr. Lapointe) to accept this amendment, and by so doing the house will have taken a most salutary step towards the enforcement of a law which is based upon the well-known and accepted precept not only of Christianity but of all known religions of the world, that one day of the week must be a day of rest.

Right Hon. ERNEST LAPOINTE (Minister of Justice): Mr. Speaker, listening to my hon. friend (Mr. Brunelle) I could not help remembering the circumstances under which this act was placed on the statute book. At that time members from my own province were not very keen on the enactment of the Lord's Day Act, and quite an agitation was carried on against it. I remember Mr. Bourassa and my friend Mr. Lavergne holding meetings of protest in the province