

SUNDAY WAR EXTRAS

Statement by Rev. W. M. Rochester, B.A., D.D.

GENERAL SECRETARY, LORD'S DAY ALLIANCE.

My information is that, whilst several papers, in their Saturday edition, suggested the possibility of a "Sunday Extra," only *one*, "The World," ventured upon the enterprise, and distribution was made in the usual way by newsboys selling on the streets.

It was reported that this paper received *official permission for this act*. Doubt as to this would be set at rest *if the paper would publish the document containing permission*, and thus the public would be assured both as to the fact and as to the official concerned. Permissions of this character are *worthless, the Lord's Day Act making no provision entrusting any officer with such authority*, the exceptions being the Board of Railway Commissioners, with respect to transportation, and the Government, in the discharge of its functions. The latter goes without question; the former is given only after a public hearing of the question at issue, when all parties have presented their plea, and is in the form of a court judgment. *Recently the Attorney-General of British Columbia dismissed from office a police constable for giving permission to open a moving picture theatre on Sunday*, and the Attorney-General of Alberta refused the petition of certain confectioners for liberty to sell on Sunday, stating that his functions as Attorney-General did not extend to granting permissions under the law, but were confined to the enforcement of the Statute. *Any administrative officer, therefore, of the law who issues such permission at once exceeds his authority and jeopardizes his position.*

As to the incident itself, the liberties of newspapers, so far as Sunday work is concerned, being defined in the Act, and other exceptions being made, *very special circumstances are necessary*, it may be concluded, to justify a Sunday issue. On general principles, too, in the interest of preserving so great an institution as our Rest Day, only *events of the most momentous character* can warrant such intrusion. Provision is made in the Act, however, for works of necessity and mercy. Assuming that the necessity exists, why should publicity depend upon private enterprise? The necessity to give such information does not rest with the newspapers,—it does rest with the Government, and it is the best judge of what is in the interests of the people, and might easily make provision for adequate publicity through the medium of the open telegraph offices, or similar means. This, in time of war, would be the most natural thing, inasmuch as the nation establishes rigorous censorship of the press.

Assuming, however, that upon the newspaper there rests the obligation of necessity, or, perhaps, mercy, to inform the public (although we are tempted to say that it would be a mercy to leave the public alone on Sunday), *the law would require the limiting of publication to the specific news required.* There can be no justification for the issue of news other than that of *immediate* and *imperative* interest. Why should *columns of promiscuous matter* be issued on Sunday? Why should *advertisements* appear? They certainly could not be justified under the Lord's Day Act.

A further limitation required by the law would be the *minimum of labor* in order to impart the information. The employment, therefore, of all the machinery, newsboys and other sellers of papers, on the street corners and through the avenues of the city, cannot be justified under the Lord's Day Act. The Statute would require *reduction of the news to the strictest limits*, and, with respect to *circulation, the limiting of business and labor to actual necessity.* A bulletin, and not an issue, would suffice for utmost necessity.

In the present case, can any one who saw the "Extra" issued by "The World" (and we saw a copy of it on Monday), say that it contained anything that justified its being issued on Sunday? A candid opinion would be that a serious imposition was practised upon the public both from the standpoint of *news* and of *necessity.* Our judgment upon the matter was that it was *a clear violation of the Lord's Day Act,* and, according to its own statement in the issue dated Sunday morning, August 9, it was intended to be something more than *the necessitous news of the war.* As a fact, this event is much to be deplored; the spirit, however, of it all is an occasion for greater humiliation. It is, in our opinion, an open declaration of purpose to intrude ordinary business in to Sunday, with a partial plea of justification based upon the present Empire crisis. The good people of the City were furnished food for thought by this event. According to its own statement, the paper took advantage of the war interest to sell, on Sunday, under cover of an extra item of news, a Sunday edition of general matter, at the usual price of five cents. This is not benevolence nor public spirit; it is *business,* pure and simple.

Further, in the breaking in upon the quiet of the home circle and of the worshippers in the various churches, by the raucous voices of young men newsboys, as they careered through the streets crying their papers, a shock was given to the sensibilities of Sabbath-loving people and a fine prophecy afforded of what Sunday would be even under a temporary domination of the Sunday newspaper. The spectacle of yesterday in this particular was a humiliating one to the City.

Too great care cannot be exercised in this particular, and the papers who abstained from their usual business last Sunday are worthy of all commendation, in our judgment, for good sense, for appreciation of the proprieties, the fitness

of things, and for the influence exerted for the perpetuation of our Sunday, with its quiet and hallowed influences.

CORRESPONDENCE.

To Toronto Dailies.

Toronto, August 11th, 1914.

Dear Sir,—The question has been raised as to the issue of Sunday editions of papers during the present war. In the capacity of Secretary of the Lord's Day Alliance, I have given this matter attention from the standpoint of the law, and would beg to express my judgment that only in very exceptional circumstances could such effort at publicity be justified, and that both as to matter and form the plea of necessity would govern, thus eliminating all matter not bearing upon the immediate crisis, such as promiscuous news, advertising, etc., and excluding all business and labor not necessary to secure the end of reasonable publicity, such as public sale, employment of newsboys, etc.

This brief statement of law I would supplement by expressing appreciation of your action in refraining from publication last Sunday, and by a respectful request, in the name of our organization, whose interest is the preservation of our Rest Day in its integrity and also in the spirit favorable to the highest welfare of the people, that your Management do its utmost to preserve the honourable traditions of Canada in this particular, which have given our land so worthy a name, and which have contributed so much to our prosperity.

I am,

Yours truly,

General Secretary.

Toronto, August 11th, 1914.

The Editor,

"The World,"
City.

Dear Sir,—I have noted the fact that, under the plea of meeting public necessity in the matter of war news, you issued and sold an edition of your paper on Sunday last, August 9th. I have examined this issue and your own statement announcing the same, and have carefully considered the whole matter in the light of the Lord's Day Act, and would beg respectfully to advise you that, in our judgment, in the publication and sale of this Sunday issue you have violated the Lord's Day Act. The contents of the Sunday edition, in large measure, are wholly without connection with the particular news of the day relating to the war, and that part purporting to be the latest news of the war is not of such a character as to suggest that the publication of it comes under the heading of "necessity or mercy." In this latter judgment, I beg to say, we are supported by the action of the several papers who intimated the probability of issuing Sunday editions giving war news, but did not do so.

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I would further say that, whilst your action in this particular may have met with the approval of some, it certainly has met with very general disapproval, and was the occasion of no inconsiderable disturbance to public worship, and constituted a needless and most objectionable intrusion, under the guise of public spirit, of business into the quiet of the Lord's Day.

I beg respectfully to call your attention to this view of the case, asking for your earnest consideration, with the hope, which I would express on behalf of our organization, that the action of last Sunday may not be repeated.

I am,

Yours truly,

General Secretary.

Toronto, August 12th, 1914.

Inspector of Police,
City Hall,

Toronto.

RE SUNDAY WAR EXTRA, AUGUST 9TH.

Dear Sir,—I was gratified to note, by the press, that you were giving attention to the matter of the issue of the "Sunday World" on August 9th. With respect to this I take the opportunity to say that I have been giving the case my attention and, examining it in the light of the law, I have come to the following conclusions, which I present for what they are worth :

1. A Sunday issue of a paper can be warranted only in circumstances of extraordinary character. This is in view of the liberties already extended to the press under the Lord's Day Act.

2. Such issue must confine its contents to the urgent news; the publication of promiscuous information, advertising, old reports, etc., cannot be justified under the Lord's Day Act.

3. Labor must be the minimum required by the circumstances. There can be no justification for the activity of the newsboys in the sale of these papers on Sunday. The end can be secured by the posting of a bulletin.

I would say that I have written to the papers drawing their attention to these matters. I am quite sure that when they realize that contents must be confined to what is absolutely necessary, they will not be so zealous with respect to a Sunday issue.

In the case of "The World," my judgment is that it unquestionably violated the Lord's Day Act both in publication and in circulation. The news was not necessitous,—indeed, it was not news; it was made a cover for the issue and sale of a regular Sunday paper, and it called into activity a complete staff of newsboys throughout the City.

Respectfully submitting the same, I am,

Yours truly,

General Secretary.