

SUNDAY OBSERVANCE

HEARINGS

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COMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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STATEMENT OF REV. DAVID G. WYLIE, PRESIDENT LORD'S DAY ALLIANCE OF THE UNITED STATES

Doctor WYLIE. The committee has certainly been courteous and fair, and every American citizen should be proud of the attention and the courtesy of this large congregation.

I happen to be president of the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States, and I want to say that I have always tried to be a fair-minded man. I have lived in New York City for 40 years. I have Catholic friends and Jewish friends. We have a law prohibiting work on Sunday, and I know of no one who objects to it.

And, gentlemen, the men who compose the Lord's Day Alliance are fair-minded men. They are men representing large interests. I am not going to take time to read their names, but I will cite Doctor Cadman, of Brooklyn, one of the outstanding men of America, who speaks every Sunday afternoon to Roman Catholics and Jews and to people of all persuasions, two millions, three millions. He is a member of the Board of Directors.

You have a right to know whom the speakers here to-night represent. I may say I represent a certain community, and you may ask me what community I represent. First of all, I represent the Presbyterian Church, and then this large aggregation of people who comprise the Lord's Day Alliance of the United States. The men who are directors of that alliance are appointed by the highest bodies, presbyteries, synods, conferences, general assemblies, whatever they may be called, and they are appointed with care.

I do not know who composes this audience. Some one said this afternoon there is a group of college students here. They have a right to be here. We are glad to have them come here. This is a broad Christian question, a question in which as American citizens we are all interested. We all want to be here, and if there are any representatives of a college here this evening let me say that the churches that are in this Lord's Day Alliance represent a very large number of people.

For example, we represent the Methodists, 8,700,000; Baptists, 5,227,225; Presbyterian, 2,500,466; Disciples of Christ, 1,668,906; Episcopalian, 1,147,814; Congregational, 861,168; Reformed, 532,668; United Brethren, 405,103; Evangelical Synod, 307,177; Christians, 108,500; Scandinavian Evangelical, 42,758; Moravians, 26,802; and various other bodies, 122,928; making a total of more than 20,021,953.

I do not say all of those 20,000,000 people look on this question in exactly the same way but I do say that I know these great bodies really believe in a Sunday. Talk about petitions. Why, sir, if we started a propaganda for signing petitions we could put down not 100,000, but a million or 5,000,000 names of people. If it were a question of arousing the people to put their names on petitions, they are ready to do it if we ask them to do it. We do not like to do it. This is not a religious question. We are not here to discuss whether we shall observe the seventh day or first day of the week. The Christian people will fight that out among themselves. This is a public matter. This is a matter in which every good citizen is interested.

I happened to attend a meeting 10 years ago of the West Side Republican Club. What was the subject under discussion? Is one day of rest in seven necessary to safeguard the physical, moral, intellectual and spiritual interest of the people? Who were represented there? The laboring men of the great State of New York, the head of the labor department of the great State of New York, the solicitor general of the United States Steel Corporation, a gentleman who was nominated on the Democratic ticket a few years ago for the Presidency of the United States, a professor from Harvard College, etc. I happened to be the only man who spoke for the church. Every man there said:

We believe that one day of rest in seven is absolutely necessary to safeguard the physical, moral, intellectual, and spiritual interests of all people.

Mr. McLEOD. Might I ask the gentleman, is this bill more of a bill for the good health of the community at large, or is it more of a bill for religious observance on Sunday?

Reverend WYLIE. We do not legislate for religious observance. I do not think the State can compel the people to go to church. This is largely a civic matter. We want one day of rest, so the people who want to go to church may be protected. Primarily, we are not legislating in the interest of religion, but in the interest of the State.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I was a pastor in the city of New York for many years, and often times I met men on the streets who said:

We are working at the post office seven days a week. Can't the church do something to get a day of rest for us?

I met men from the Elevated, the Pennsylvania, and the New York Central, and they were all the same. I met barbers, and they asked the same question. To-day Saratoga and New York are the only cities in the State where barber shops are open on Sunday.

Mr. McLEOD. There is a bill before this committee now to close the barber shops on Sunday. Do you believe that bill should be enacted into law?

Reverend WYLIE. I certainly do. They are entitled to a day of rest.

Mr. McLEOD. Then you do believe in class legislation?

Reverend WYLIE. I do not believe in class legislation. I believe, unless it is necessary work, work of necessity or mercy, that everybody should have the right to a day of rest.

Mr. McLEOD. That is for one particular class; is it not? I refer to the bill proposing to close the barber shops on Sunday.

Reverend WYLIE. I would not legislate for them alone. I would legislate to give everybody a day of rest.

Mr. McLEOD. My question was whether you favor such a bill as that?

Reverend WYLIE. I favor a bill for anybody who wants a day of rest to get it.

Mr. McLEOD. Without discrimination.

Reverend WYLIE. I would not discriminate against anybody who wants a day of rest.

Mr. McLEOD. By enacting that bill into law would you not discriminate?

Reverend WYLIE. I see no discrimination.

Mr. McLEOD. Would not that bill discriminate in favor of that class and keep the rest out? Is that fair?

Reverend WYLIE. Leave what rest out?

Mr. McLEOD. This bill just pertains to the barbers in the District of Columbia, that the barber shops be closed on Sunday in the District. You said you would like to see that enacted into law.

Reverend WYLIE. Yes, sir. Let them have a day of rest. Let the shoe shiners have a day of rest. Let everybody have a day of rest. Right on Broadway in New York, an Italian, a Roman Catholic, has a little shop. He closed his shop on Sunday, and after keeping it closed for about five weeks, he reopened it. I said to him, "What is the matter, Tony?" He said, "I want to spend Sunday with my family and go to church, but the man over there, because he keeps open and competes with me, and so I must keep open."

Mr. McLEOD. But by enacting that bill into law we would be preferring that class against other classes.

Reverend WYLIE. Not at all. You would give them a day of rest.

Mr. McLEOD. But the bill would be preferential.

Reverend WYLIE. Not preferential.

Mr. McLEOD. Not preferential?

Reverend WYLIE. Not a bit. They just want a day of rest.

Mr. McLEOD. It is only a question of that bill.

Reverend WYLIE. They all want it, and I would give it to them.

Now, Mr. Chairman, I believe in fair play. The other people here want to talk, and I want to let them talk. I have eight or ten reasons I would like to mention why I am in favor of the bill.

I am in favor of the bill because a day of rest is a necessity. God made us and God knows what we need. Whether it is the seventh day or whether it is the first day, a day of rest is absolutely necessary. It is a part of the constitution of our nature. The professor from Harvard in the West Side Republican Club said psychology proves that a day of rest is necessary.

I think it is a fair bill. There is nothing extreme in it. It is modeled closely after the law in most of the States. These laws have been before the courts and have been declared constitutional. There is nothing new here. There is nothing revolutionary. There is nothing to prevent any man from worshipping God in his own way. I came from Scotch people who stood out for their right to worship. I would be the last man in the world to say to Seventh Day Adventist or to any other men that they must worship God in my way. No, no. We stand for the right of worship on the day when we want to worship God. All we want is a law that protects the great majority of people and frees them from labor on the Sabbath; so they can worship. I do not think this law violates anybody's conscience. It does not prohibit anyone from worshipping God on the seventh day, any more than do the laws in these 37 different States that have been mentioned here to-night. The bill seeks to protect the District of Columbia from Sunday commercialization.

Why do we from the outside come in here? What are we doing in the city of Washington? A man said that to me this afternoon, that when the resolution to secure a Sunday law for the District of Columbia came before the Protestant-Episcopal Convention in New Orleans people got up and said, "I move this be thrown out. What has this convention to do with the city of Washington, any more

than New York or Philadelphia?" They did not know that the people of the District of Columbia had not a word to say on the subject. They did not know the people of the District of Columbia do not have the right to express themselves, any more than the people of the Canal Zone. The reason we come here is that this is common ground. This is the home of the Nation, of the Congress. That is why we come here. If the people of this town could take care of it and could vote for what they want, we would not interfere. We would not come here. We come as citizens, because Congress is the governing body of the District of Columbia.

That is all I have to say, Mr. Chairman. I am in favor of the law, and I am in favor of any reasonable Sunday law that will give the people a day of rest. [Applause.]

Mr. McLEOD. Have you any objection to hearing from one or two of the opponents to this bill?

Mr. LANKFORD. That is all right with me, Mr. Chairman.

STATEMENT OF JOHN B. COLPOYS, EDITOR OF THE TRADE UNIONIST, OFFICIAL ORGAN OF THE WASHINGTON CENTRAL LABOR UNION, WASHINGTON, D. C.

Mr. McLEOD. What is your full name?

Mr. COLPOYS. John B. Colpoys.

Mr. McLEOD. And your business?

Mr. COLPOYS. I am editor of the Trade Unionist, the official organ of the Washington Central Labor Union. As editor of that paper, I represent the sentiment of the laboring people of the District of Columbia. I can go further and say that I probably represent the majority of the laboring people of the country, as represented by organized labor.

We are not opposed to a day of rest bill. In fact, we favor one day of rest. I heard some of the proponents of this bill say they felt so sorry for people who had to work 7 days a week, and that they had been largely responsible for relieving that condition in some places; that through their efforts legislation had been enacted which gave these people one day of rest. Let me say to them and to all others that the working man never got anything, either from the employer or by legislation, that was beneficial to him. [Applause.] The way he got what was beneficial and what was coming to him has been through his economic organizations. [Applause.]

The Washington Central Labor Union has gone on record with respect to this bill in this way: The last speaker stated that he represented 18,000,000 people. I am not going to say I represent 18,000,000 people. I am going to say, however, that I represent 65,000 members of organized labor in the District of Columbia, and in turn represent approximately 200,000 of the population of the District of Columbia. I think without fear of contradiction I can say I represent more of the people of the District of Columbia than any of the proponents of this bill.

This bill is almost identical with a bill introduced in the last session of Congress in the Senate, by Senator Jones of Washington. The phraseology has been changed in the first section. Senator Jones did not sponsor the bill, but he introduced it. Labor, always being