

Sunday in Quebec, 1907-1937

Paul LA VERDURE

When representatives of the Toronto-based Lord's Day Alliance rushed on Ottawa in 1906 to have the Lord's Day Bill made into law, Roman Catholics and Anglicans opposed Presbyterian and Methodist attempts to make Canada righteous by force of law. Under Henri Bourassa's leadership, French-Canadians arguing for the rights of conscience and provincial autonomy in the Lord's Day debate of 1906 opposed English-Protestant desires for a uniform Canadian day of rest. An amendment, sponsored mainly by Quebec's Roman Catholic members of parliament, gave the administration of the 1906 Lord's Day Act to the Attorney-General of each province. This guaranteed that Quebec could ignore the Lord's Day Act. Furthermore, just before the federal Act came into effect in 1907, Quebec passed a considerably watered-down provincial law that guaranteed individuals, Jews or Seventh-Day Adventists, for example, the right to work on Sunday if their consciences forced them to rest on some other day. Quebec in effect passed a weak provincial Sunday law to take precedence over the stricter federal law. Quebec legislated Sunday as the common rest day if no other day was chosen by the individual. Protestants through the Lord's Day Alliance could well try to enforce a sabbatarian version of a Christian Canada in other provinces, but not in Quebec. All of this began to change soon after the First World War.

A form of Catholic sabbatarianism had grown out of Quebec's answer to the challenges of industrialization and urbanization. An organized Catholic sabbatarianism was a later development in Canadian life than Protestant sabbatarianism because, unlike Protestant sabbatarians, Roman Catholics did not base their Sunday claims entirely on a literal biblical interpretation. Very much like Protestant sabbatarianism, however, after initial successes, it rapidly withered in the political arena.

In 1910, a Jesuit, Léonidas Hudon, reformed the League of the Sacred Heart, a prayer society, and linked it to other Catholic societies to become a

lobby group and a force in Quebec.¹ Hudon's successor as chaplain to the League of the Sacred Heart was another Jesuit, Joseph-Papin Archambault. A short, slim individual, Archambault's voice was nasally high pitched and, when preaching, monotonous. Yet his energy and his intellect were undoubted. On taking over the League of the Sacred Heart, Archambault concentrated on more education for the Catholic laity in the practical application of Roman Catholic teachings in the Canadian context.² Using Belgian and Dutch Jesuit examples, Archambault promoted intense closed monastic retreats during the First World War. In these retreats, where his knowledge and small intimate talks offset his speaking voice, prayer, fasting, and readings from the Bible alternated with the study of European Catholic Action principles, authors, and techniques.³

After the First World War, highly sensitized retreatants crept out from their self-imposed monastic silence to propose an articulate Catholic critique of Quebec society. Archambault emerged as the pre-eminent theorist of Catholic Action and went on to organize the "Semaines sociales" (Social Weeks) beginning in 1920. These almost annual conferences brought several members of the Catholic elite – clergy, bishops, religious, and lay people – together to renew the intense educational experiences of the retreat and to spread these teachings to a wider audience.⁴ Archambault himself spoke little but chose many of the speakers and the topics. The 1920 conference studied Pope Leo XIII's *Rerum novarum* of 1891 and touched on issues which would

¹ Joseph-Papin Archambault, SJ, "Les trois phases de l'École Sociale Populaire," *Les vingt-cinq ans de l'École Sociale Populaire. 1911-1936. Une oeuvre de doctrine et de salut*, Ecole Sociale Populaire, vol. 269-270 (juin-juillet 1936): pp. 42-50; also Archives of the French-Canadian Province of the Society of Jesus, Record Group 3, Joseph-Papin Archambault, SJ, Papers, boxes 34-46 (abbreviated hereafter as JPA, box number-file number, item number) JPA, 38-5,1-32, in which Archambault's sermon plans about Sunday observance were published in the *Bulletin de la Ligue du Sacré Coeur* (1914): p. 180, and in other religious newspapers.

² Archambault, *La Question Sociale et nos Devoirs catholiques*. II. Ecole Sociale Populaire: vol. 66 (Montreal 1917): p. 37. I am indebted to the Rev. Fr. Joseph Cossette, SJ, former archivist of the French Canadian Province of the Society of Jesus, for this description of Archambault.

³ Archambault, *L'Organisation ouvrière catholique en Hollande*, Ecole Sociale Populaire: vol. 1 (Montreal 1911): 29p.; JPA, 39-1,38, "L'Observation du Dimanche" in *Le Bulletin des Directeurs* (August-September 1912); Archambault, *La Villa St. Martin. Retraites Fermées pour les Hommes* (Abord-à-Plouffe, 1922), 24p.; *Figures Catholiques. Préface du Juge Thomas Tremblay* (Montreal 1950), 192p.

⁴ An ideological analysis is available in Richard Jones, *L'Idéologie de L'ACTION CATHOLIQUE (1917-1939)* (Québec 1974).

occupy Quebec labour unions for the next forty years.⁵ For example, the 1920 speakers called for the six-day and the forty-eight hour work week.

Two of the 1922 Social Week talks about capital and labour dealt with Sunday. The first talk presented the biblical and church texts, from Genesis to Leo XIII, that established Sunday as a day of physical and social rest for divine worship. The second talk, by the Vicar General of Chicoutimi, Eugène Lapointe, claimed that Sunday work in Quebec's factories and the pulp and paper industries destroyed workers' health, home and spiritual lives.⁶ Immediately, the Social Week executive approached the episcopate of Quebec for their leadership on the Sunday problem.⁷

On 18 April 1922, the bishops of Quebec published a pastoral letter on Sunday's importance. The letter had three sections. The first section set out the theory of Catholic Sunday observance. The theory emphasized attendance at religious services – as opposed to the strict sabbath rest observance of the Jews and the Protestants – and argued this position from the Bible, Thomas Aquinas, the Plenary Council of Quebec and, naturally, Leo XIII's *Rerum Novarum*.

The second section spoke to employers in general and argued that Sunday desecration was a wilful social sickness tempting God's punishment. On a practical note, the letter also stated that Sunday rest could be useful in keeping workers content while it also allowed time for worship and religious services. The bishops warned the employers that if workers were not given the chance to rest and to go to religious services, God's punishment would come from revolutionary, dechristianized workers breaking down the social order. Although communism was not mentioned, the recent Russian Revolution and the Winnipeg General Strike were not far from everyone's thinking. The bishops recommended to the employers a strict observance of rest from midnight Saturday to midnight Sunday. In an oblique reference to

⁵ *Rerum Novarum* 1920; Unions 1921; Capital and Labour 1922; The Family 1923; Property 1924; Justice 1925; Authority 1927; The Economic Problem 1928; The City 1929; The State 1931; The Christian Social Order 1932; The Land Problem 1933; Social Education 1935; Professional Organization 1936; Cooperation 1937; For a Christian Society 1938; The Christian in the Family 1940; Catholic Action and Social Action 1941; Democracy 1942; Temperance 1943; Colonization Congress 1943; Social Restoration 1944; Liberty and liberties 1945; Youth 1946; Rural Life 1947; Peace 1948; Work and Leisure 1949; The Home 1950.

⁶ Ecole Sociale Populaire, *Semaines Sociales du Canada. IIIe Session ... Ottawa 1922 Capital et Travail. Compte rendu des Cours et Conférences*. (Montreal: Bibliothèque de l'Action française, 1923); "Le Repos du Dimanche. Principes – Avantages," by the Rev. Fr. Trudeau, O.P., pp. 112-31; "Le Travail du dimanche dans notre industrie" by Mgr Eugène Lapointe, pp. 132-49.

⁷ Archambault, *Contre le travail du dimanche. La Ligue du Dimanche* (Montreal: 1924) pp. 8-9.

the Jews, the bishops called upon the civil power to ensure that non-Christians did not require work from Christians.

The third section declared that all those who missed Sunday Mass, especially those who missed Mass for excursions, theatre shows, and professional sports, were in mortal sin. Excursions, innocent entertainments, and sports in themselves were not sinful; they were permissible on Sundays but only after all obligations to God had been fulfilled. The bishops concluded that Sunday observance brought honour to the parish, strength to the family, and blessings on the nation.⁸ The comments about the permissibility of innocent amusements and the appeal to the Roman Catholic Church's authority marked the only Catholic differences with the Protestant Lord's Day alliance view of Sunday.

The bishops had also given the signal that the time for study was over. An ad hoc committee in the city of Quebec then successfully prosecuted Sunday theatres.⁹ To coordinate the ad hoc prosecutions, on 16 April 1923, Archambault brought fifty people together in the basement of the Gesù, the Jesuit-run parish church in downtown Montreal. Representatives of the main Montreal Catholic societies, many of them former retreatants, attended. For example, the Union Catholique, the Saint-Vincent-de-Paul Society, the Association Catholique des Voyageurs de Commerce, Catholic unions, the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne-française, the Ligue d'Action Française, and the Saint-Jean-Baptiste Society were represented. It seemed as if the who's who of Quebec's Catholic lay people had come.¹⁰ A constitution for the new Ligue du Dimanche, drafted by Archambault, was approved and so the Ligue du Dimanche was born.

The Ligue accepted individuals and organizations as members. Members signed a pledge not to work on Sundays, not to employ anyone on Sundays,

⁸ JPA, 34-5,5, "Lettre Pastorale de Son Eminence Le Cardinal Louis-Nazaire Bégin, Archevêque de Québec, et de Nos Seigneurs les Archevêques et Evêques de la province Ecclésiastique de Québec sur La transgression du devoir dominical," (18 April 1922): 12p.

⁹ Lord's Day Alliance of Canada Papers, Manuscript Collection 129 of the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Library, University of Toronto (hereafter LDA) box 155, *Quebec Chronicle*, 4 October 1922, "Lord's Day Act To Be Enforced. Legal Action To Be Taken Against Theatre Proprietors For Opening On Sundays." Sir F.-X. Lemieux, Chief Justice of the Superior Court, Hon. Nemèse Garneau, Rev. Fr. Philippe Casgrain, etc., were members of the powerful committee.

¹⁰ JPA, 34-5,7, "La Ligue du Dimanche, Fondation." The Central committee was the Rev. Fr. Edmour Hébert, Adélard Dugré, SJ, Alfred Bernier of the A.C.V., and the lawyer and V.P. of the S.S.J.B., Jean-Chrysostome Martineau. Others recruited the following day were Judge Edouard Fabre-Surveyer, the President General of the Saint Vincent de Paul Conferences of Montreal, M. Julien, the lawyer Arthur Laramée, the businessman Paul Joubert, Wilfrid Déziel, Edgar Genest, the secretary of the Syndicats catholiques, Gérard Tremblay, the notary Beaudoin, J.-W. Cadieux, and the editor of *Le Devoir*, Omer Héroux.

not to go to theatres on Sundays, to fight Sunday work by any means, and to follow directives from the Ligue du Dimanche.¹¹ Only practising Catholics were allowed to join and the League restricted itself to Quebec where the majority of Canada's Catholics lived. The Ligue's goal was to have the Sunday laws enforced and Sunday observed according to Church law and teachings. To do this, the League continued to study Sunday work, educate lay people through conferences, tracts, newspaper articles, congresses, and local committees, and lobby the government through petitions. Its central organization was divided into three major urban and ecclesiastical committees: Montreal, Trois-Rivières, and Quebec City. Montreal, the largest city of French Canada, was the seat of the central committee. Montreal provided the secretary, most of the executive officers, and the chaplain: Joseph-Papin Archambault.

The first targets of the Ligue du Dimanche's Catholic Action crusade were the pulp and paper mills. Quebec's Cardinal Louis-Nazaire Bégin wrote a pastoral letter on May Day 1923, a traditional labour holiday and the feast of St. Joseph the worker, advising all workers to quit their jobs when forced to work on Sundays. Montreal's Archbishop Georges Gauthier directed his clergy to instruct the faithful in their Sunday duties.¹² Monseigneur Eugène Lapointe of Chicoutimi urged immediate political action against the Price Paper Company.¹³ Surviving documents show that the Quebec committee alone amassed over 6700 members and gathered resolutions against Sunday work from 211 municipalities. The pressure from so many Catholic organizations culminated in a visit by a delegation from the Ligue du Dimanche to Quebec's Liberal Premier Louis-Alexandre Taschereau.¹⁴ In alarm, the pulp, flour, and glass mills appealed to Taschereau to recognize that their particular industries required Sunday work. They gained a slight reprieve while the government studied the situation.¹⁵ Throughout 1924, the pressure on Taschereau mounted higher. *Le Soleil, Le Droit, Le Devoir, Le*

¹¹ JPA, 34-5,6 "Statuts et Règlements de La Ligue du Dimanche."

¹² JPA, 45-4,1, 26 [October?] 1923 to Judge Dorion, President of the Ligue; LDA 153, *Montreal Gazette*, 1 May 1923, "Lord's Day Observance. Cardinal Begin Sends Pastoral Letter to Workers"; *Lord's Day Advocate* (Newspaper published by the Lord's Day Alliance of Canada. New Series Vol. I:1-XXII:12 [1903-1926]) (hereafter ADV) XIX:7 (July 1923) "Quebec"; LDA 153, *Montreal Gazette*, 28 May 1923, "Labor On Sunday Matter of Inquiry"; Mandements. *Lettres Pastorales et Circulaires des Evêques de Montréal* vol. 17 (21 November 1922): p. 103.

¹³ JPA, 34-5,23, Lapointe to Adélar Dugré, SJ, 7 October 1923.

¹⁴ JPA, 34-5,27, Ernest Moreau to Martineau, secretary of the Ligue du Dimanche, 22 November 1923. Also JPA, 34-5,28-30 and National Archives of Quebec (hereafter NAQ), E17-410, files 4288, 4289, 4290, and 4306; E17 Indexes show that from 1919 to 1931, the pulp and paper mills caused the most complaints.

¹⁵ JPA, 45-2 and 45-3,2, Lapointe to the Ligue du Dimanche, 13 October 1924.

Colon, La Patrie, La Presse, Le Canada, Le Bien Public, L'Action Catholique, L'Étoile Du Nord, and *Le Nouvelliste* published articles, editorials and letters in June and July of 1924 all in favour of Sunday laws.¹⁶ Also in 1924, Archambault published a pamphlet *Contre le travail du dimanche* in the Catholic Action series, *L'Oeuvre des Tracts*. The League, he declared, was founded to prevent people from becoming industrial slaves. Why did the transportation industry insist on working Sundays? Why did factories run until 4 or 6 a.m. on Sunday and start again at 4 or 6 p.m.? Money, he answered in disgust! In one of the 1925 Social Week conferences, a speaker complained that the provincial law did not allow the full severity of the Mosaic law to fall upon Sunday transgressors: death.¹⁷ Public opinion became so insistent that Premier Taschereau wrote to the pulp and paper companies that the provincial law, ignored in the past, would be enforced against them in future.

Each company promised to stop work on Sundays, but each had its own way of interpreting the law. The Saint-Maurice Pulp and Paper Company cleaned machines for six hours after shutting down at midnight Saturday and then spent another six hours before Sunday midnight in preparation for the week. The International Paper Company spent the morning in repairs and began work again at 4 p.m. The St. Lawrence Paper Company began repair work at 8 a.m. The Wayagamack shut down from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sunday. The same half-hearted attempts to comply with the letter of the law could be seen at Laurentide, Price Brothers, Eddy, Booth, International, and Canada Cement.¹⁸ A 1926 provincial commission of inquiry into Sunday observance

¹⁶ E.g. LDA 157, *Le Nouvelliste* of Trois-Rivières, 7 April 1924, "Peut-on Arrêter Le Travail Du Dimanche?"; 13 May 1924 "Pas De Solution. Les Compagnies Et Le Travail Du Dimanche. Elles ne voient pas comment l'état de choses actuel pourrait être modifié" quoting James Murray of International Paper Co.; National Archives of Canada, RG13 A2, vol. 369, file 152, "Lord's Day Act. Sundry questions. Consolidated file": City Clerk, Montreal to the Secretary of State, 8 November 1923; Secretary-Archivist, Knights of Columbus, Shawinigan Falls to the Minister of Justice, 1 December 1923; Vol. 282, file 1827, Municipal Council of Shawinigan Falls to the Minister of Justice, Sir Lomer Gouin, 22 October 1923.

For an excellent summary of newspaper opinions on both sides of the Quebec Sunday debate, see Antonin Dupont, *Les relations entre l'Église et l'État sous Louis-Alexandre Taschereau 1920-1936* (Montreal: 1973) pp. 145-74.

¹⁷ "With what force, even today, would the priest's voice penetrate the soul if, at the foot of the pulpit stood a vengeful judge able to imprison the heartless masters who build their hateful fortunes on the souls' ruin!" Simon Lapointe, "La Justice et la sanctification du dimanche," *École Sociale Populaire, Semaines Sociales du Canada.... Trois-Rivières 1925. La Justice* (Montreal: 1925), p. 314 [my translation].

¹⁸ JPA, 34-5,63, Taschereau to Pulp and Paper Makers, September 1926; JPA, 34-5,76, "Le Travail du dimanche. Dans l'industrie de la Pulpe et du Papier"; 41-12,20, Fr. Joseph Bonhomme, OMI, to Archambault, 11 October 1926.

in the pulp and paper industry exerted additional pressure on the companies, but unsuccessfully.¹⁹ The mills were too powerful in isolated regions of Quebec where their rule was law. The Ligue du Dimanche published a small book, *Le Repos Dominical*, in 1927. Archambault, of course, wrote the introduction; the conclusion insisted on government intervention. Finally, in 1927 Taschereau started prosecutions against factories that refused to close.²⁰ It had been almost five years since the Semaine Sociale and the pastoral letter of 1922. Fortunately for the companies, the fines were so small that the prosecutions were ignored.

Cases against theatres, instigated by English-speaking Quebeckers, had periodically dragged through the reluctant courts.²¹ Between four and five o'clock on Sunday afternoon, the 9th of January 1927, a fire broke out in Montreal's Laurier Palace Theatre. Seventy-eight children between the ages of five and sixteen years of age suffocated or were trampled to death. More were injured. The shock forced a provincial commission of inquiry. All Catholic organizations, unions, and the press joined the Ligue du Dimanche in asking for Sunday theatre closings.²² From the moment the ashes cooled until the commission's final report, the Montreal diocesan newspaper, *La Semaine Religieuse*, called for the closing of all theatres on Sundays and for the exclusion of children from the theatres at all times. The fire, said militant Catholics, was a punishment from God for the theatres' Sunday desecration.²³ The Retail Merchants Association and the international labour organizations protested, the former for profitable motives, the latter to provide entertainment to people who did not want to go to Mass.

The Laurier Palace Theatre Commission examined the reasons why films were so popular that people would ignore their priests' anathemas. It concluded that immorality, free love, adultery, divorce, thefts, murders, suicides, and, more importantly, the depiction of people flouting legal and religious authority attracted paying customers. Although the federal 1906 law forbade Sunday theatrical shows entirely, the Lord's Day Alliance request that the stricter federal law be enforced was not discussed. Perhaps the government realized that it could not stop people from watching films. Still, the Roman Catholic Church insisted that the portrayal of unpunished

¹⁹ NAQ, E17-509, file 1532, "Report of Inquiry," 4 March 1926.

²⁰ ADV XXII:2 (February 1926) "The Tide Turns"; e.g. NAQ, E17-1479, file 6202, Report re Harricana Mines, 8 September 1928.

²¹ NAQ, E17-1469, file 1C26-1414A, Index for 1918, and files 363, 365, 366, etc.; ADV XV:6 (July 1919) "It was a Famous Victory."

²² École Sociale Populaire, *Dimanche vs Cinéma (les articles publiés dans la Semaine Religieuse du 20 janvier au 14 juillet 1927)* (Montreal: 1927); also NAQ, E26-35, 223-1, 12 May 1927.

²³ JPA, 34-5, 81, "Le Travail Du Dimanche," broadsheet originally published in *Le Bien Public*, 25 January 1927.

immorality promoted disrespect for authority. Since both church and state were able to agree that children's respect for authority was important, on August 30, after the 1927 provincial elections were safely won, the judge recommended that children be denied entry into the theatres. Although the Laurier Palace Theatre had been overcrowded, badly-ventilated, and had had too few exits, building safety standards were never discussed in the report. The Taschereau government introduced a law forbidding entry into theatres to children under the age of sixteen. This legislation implied that Sunday shows were legal for everyone over fifteen, in spite of the 1906 federal Lord's Day Act which outlawed all Sunday shows.

This new legislation angered the bishops so much that their sabbatarianism took an extreme direction. All of the bishops and archbishops of Quebec signed another pastoral letter which denounced all Sunday activities, even those raising money for charity. Furthermore, the bishops encouraged the people to go to court and into politics. "If need be," the bishops wrote, "use the civil law, and if it is again successfully avoided, we are sure our legislators will dutifully amend, refine, strengthen, and give the law effective penalties."²⁴ Clearly, if Taschereau's Liberals were slow to close the theatres, the bishops were prepared to support another set of legislators who would.²⁵ Taschereau began a new series of prosecutions. Only one prosecution forced a theatre to close in 1929.²⁶

In the late 1920s, the sabbatarians turned to another target. A Ligue du Dimanche investigation showed that many small Jewish businesses were open both Saturdays and Sundays. The Quebec Sunday law allowed Jews to do business on Sunday if for conscience's sake they did not do business on Saturday and did not disturb anyone in their own Sunday rest. Jews were allowed to work on Saturday or on Sunday but not on both.²⁷ As conspiracy theories and the publication of anti-semitic books and newspapers flourished, Ligue members saw Jews behind every evil. The Ligue du Dimanche thought it saw Jews owning the pulp and paper mills and forcing good French-Canadian Christians to work on the holy day of Sunday. Looking closely at the theatres, the Ligue saw Jewish owners or film makers tempting

²⁴ JPA. 34-5,88, "Lettre Pastorale de Nos Seigneurs les Archevêques et Evêques de la Province civile de Québec, sur la Sanctification du Dimanche" (21 November 1927), p. 65 [my translation].

²⁵ "Le dimanche et le cinéma," *La Semaine Religieuse de Montréal* vol. 88:23 (6 June 1929), praised the provincial government which, under Duplessis' pressure, forbade Sunday theatres.

²⁶ *Marin v. United Amusement Corp.* 1929.

²⁷ "Les Juifs sont la prudence même: quelques-uns ne vendent, le dimanche, qu'à leurs coreligionnaires": Archambault, *Contre le travail du dimanche* (1924) p. 5.

the morals of Canadian Catholic youth.²⁸ Finally, looking closely at the little shops of St-Laurent Boulevard and Sherbrooke Street in Montreal, spy squads of Catholic Action members could see the Jews working both Saturdays and Sundays. This put stores owned by French Canadians, supposedly working only six days in the week, at a competitive disadvantage. Montreal's courts began to condemn Jew after Jew for petty Sunday offences.²⁹

In 1929, Archambault instituted "le mois du dimanche" (Sunday month) and dedicated the entire month of April to Sunday observance. Every Catholic liturgical celebration on every day in April was taken up with the Sunday question. Schools were asked to set assignments and exams with Sunday as their topic. Songs were composed, poems and stories were written, prayers were said. Every pope's pronouncement was brought out; every bishop's pastoral was studied again; every saint who had ever said anything about Sunday was brought forward for veneration. Over sixty monthly magazines and over fifty weekly and daily newspapers participated. The Sunday month was in the middle of the provincial election. Both political parties promised to do their utmost to enforce the provincial and the federal Sunday laws. The month's campaign was a resounding success.³⁰ Once re-elected, the Taschereau government named two Sunday law inspectors, both men recommended by the Ligue du Dimanche, to travel the province. Ironically, both men worked Sundays. In memory of this outpouring of public opinion, the Ligue du Dimanche promoted a "Semaine du dimanche" (Sunday week) every year from 1930 to 1960, similar to the Alliance's Lord's Day Week in the rest of Canada.

As the Depression descended on Quebec, an avalanche of complaints about the Jews poured into the Ligue's offices. The president of the Fédération Nationale Saint-Jean-Baptiste, Marie Gérin-Lajoie, known for her women's suffrage position, wrote to the Ligue du Dimanche pledging her personal support and her organization to the Ligue in its fight against the

²⁸ *La Semaine Religieuse de Montréal* vol. 86:35 (1 September 1927): "After the conclusions from the cinema investigation," the editor wrote, "Let us admit that the Jews and the Greeks opening their shops on Sunday have been lucky!" [my translation]. NAQ, E171478, "Index 1927"; E17-1479, "Index 1928."

²⁹ *Rex v. Levinson* 1924; NAQ, E17-481, item 236, *Eugene Bond v. Recorder of Montreal* 1925; other cases against Jews: see E17-1477, "Index 1926."

³⁰ JPA, 39-2,2, Archambault, *Le mois du dimanche* (Montreal: L'Oeuvre des Tracts no. 117, 1929) 16p.; also Antonin Dupont, p. 163; politicking: 35-1,9, Guy Bolduc, Secretary-Treasurer of the Village and Parish of Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré to J.-C. Martineau, Secretary of the Ligue du Dimanche, 4 May 1929; 35-1,16, L.-P. Lévesque, C.Ss.R., Rector of Ste-Anne-de-Beaupré, to M. Rodolphe Godin, Secretary-General of the Association Catholique de la Jeunesse Canadienne-française – Montréal, 15 May 1929.

Jews.³¹ Newspapers as diverse as the right-wing *L'Action Catholique*, the liberal *Le Progrès du Saguenay*, and Adrien Arcand's fascist *Le Miroir* published articles against the Jewish exemption clause.³²

The flash point occurred when Allan Bray, president of the City of Montreal's executive committee, stated that since the Jews celebrated New Year's on Saturday, 21 September 1930, and closed their stores on that day, they could open their stores on the following Sunday.³³ The campaign against the Jews took on new dimensions. The Ligue du Dimanche again entered the political arena to pressure the City of Montreal to reverse its decision. Mr. Bray reassured the Ligue du Dimanche that Montreal had been busy with over 148 Sunday cases in the preceding six months, most of them involving Jews. The Ligue complained that the number of cases against the Jews was too low; Catholic Action squads had discovered 134 more cases in one day in only one area of Montreal.³⁴ The Confédération des Travailleurs Catholiques du Canada, the Knights of Columbus, the Fédération des Ouvriers du Canada, and other organizations called for the repeal of the provincial law so that Quebec would fall under the stricter federal law.³⁵ Maurice Duplessis, the Conservative from Trois-Rivières, pledged his support to the Ligue du Dimanche and was duly enrolled as an honorary member.³⁶ When the Catholic youth group, Jeune Canada, complained loudly and irrationally that the federal Lord's Day Act was used only to persecute French Canadians while English-speaking Jews were left alone, the provincial government prepared a confidential study about recent prosecutions.

The secret study found that only three per cent of all cases in all of Quebec involved French-Canadians. The vast majority involved Jews. The rest were Italians, Greeks, and English-speaking Canadians. The government commissioned the report in order to prove that it was not party to an anti-French federal campaign; it proved instead that the provincial and municipal governments of Quebec condoned an anti-Jewish campaign.³⁷ The

³¹ JPA, 35-2,45, 9 March 1932.

³² JPA, 43-1,1-108 and 43-7,54, *Montreal Herald*, 2 December 1930; a systematic summary of newspaper articles in Dupont, pp. 145-74.

³³ "Le travail du dimanche. Autour d'une fausse manoeuvre," *La Semaine religieuse de Montréal* vol. 89:40 (2 October 1930).

³⁴ JPA, 44-4,1, 4, 9, and 36, correspondence between de la Rochelle and Bray, beginning 7 October 1930.

³⁵ JPA, 43-1,58, *L'Action catholique*, 13 December 1934, "L'abrogation de la loi qui permet aux Juifs..."; pp. 44-4,100-41.

³⁶ JPA, 35-2,9, Duplessis to the Secretary of the Ligue, 26 January 1932; 35-2,136, "Rapport des Activités Générales du Comité Régional Trifluvien de la Ligue du Dimanche pour l'année 1932," 14 January 1933.

³⁷ NAQ, E17-793, file 475, memorandum, 20 December 1933.

records of the Montreal courts from 1930 to 1932 were a roll call of the Jews of Montreal. Jews were allowed to open stores on Sunday; but if they sold on both Saturday and Sunday, they were prosecuted. If they employed non-Jews or if they sold to non-Jews on Sundays, they were prosecuted. If they did anything besides selling on Sundays to Jews, they were prosecuted – making criminals of almost all of the Jewish storekeepers of Montreal.³⁸ Although there was evidence that many French-Canadian shops also kept open, very few of these were prosecuted. Comparing Montreal to the situation in Germany, the Jewish storekeepers said nothing, paid the fines, and often closed their doors, working five days a week instead of their competitors' six.³⁹ The French Catholic organizations still demanded the repeal of the Jewish exemption clause. The Lord's Day Alliance, writing from Toronto on behalf of Quebec's English Protestants, happily wished the Ligue du Dimanche success in suppressing the Jewish exemption clause.⁴⁰

Archambault asked the secretary of the Ligue du Dimanche to write to the Premier of Quebec formally asking that the Jewish exemption clause be stricken from Quebec's Sunday law. The idea of Jews working on Sunday was "against the spirit of our legislation based on Christian principles and contrary to good order."⁴¹ A threat of unforeseen consequences, of civil disorder, and of riots underlay the demand. Adrien Arcand openly stated that his fascist followers were prepared to beat up Jews that opened on Sundays.⁴² Taschereau bargained for time by replying that the provincial government could not repeal a statutory clause recognized by the federal government.⁴³ When the Ligue turned to the federal authorities, the federal lawyers strongly and unhesitatingly argued that Quebec had the right to repeal the clause

³⁸ NAQ, E17-2150, "Infractions à la loi du dimanche"; and E17-1485, file 1301.

³⁹ David Rome, *The Jewish Congress Archival Record of 1936. With a report on Sabbath Rest (in lieu of a Preface)* (Montreal: 1978), p. 1, and Rome, *Jewish Archival Record of 1935. With Preface by Victor Sefton* (Montreal: 1976), p. ix; JPA, 43-1,100, *Montreal Gazette*, 19 December 1938, "Observance of Sunday Is Urged Upon Jews." The Ligue so often promoted and participated in anti-semitic campaigns that Betcherman went so far as to label it fascist, but with little other evidence: *The Swastika and the Maple Leaf* (Toronto: 1975), p. 39.

⁴⁰ JPA, 35-2,193, Huestis to de la Rochelle, 23 May 1933.

⁴¹ JPA, 44-4,68, Archambault to de la Rochelle, 3 March 1933.

⁴² For Arcand, see Rome, *The Jewish Congress Archival Record of 1936*; pp. 5A, 12A, 13A, 22A; and for Laurendeau: p. 17A.

⁴³ National Archives of Canada, RG13 A2, vol. 400, file 406, 12 March 1934, the Attorney-General of Quebec to the Minister of Justice, 12 March 1934; "Note concernant la demande d'abrogation de l'article de la Loi du dimanche (S.R.Q., 1925, c.199)," 20 June 1934.

without asking federal permission.⁴⁴ Obviously, the federal government did not wish to bring the touchy religious issue into the federal arena.

In May 1935, Maurice Duplessis and his colleague, Jean-Paul Sauvé, again brought the question of the Jewish exemption clause into the Quebec legislature. Taschereau outflanked the demand by staging a successful majority vote to submit the question to Quebec's Court of Appeal. This move bought Taschereau the chance to hold another election during which he could promise to repeal the clause if the courts decided that he could. He obviously preferred not to abolish provincial and civil rights so hard won by Henri Bourassa and Quebec's Liberals many years before while Taschereau had been a younger and more idealistic parliamentarian. The Ligue du Dimanche's lawyer, Antonio Perrault, a professor of civil law at the University of Montreal, claimed that the Attorney-General of Quebec (in this case, Premier Taschereau) had absolute control over the provincial law and administrative authority over the federal law. It was Taschereau's right to repeal the Jewish exemption clause in the provincial law. The provincial court agreed.⁴⁵ Although the case was heard in October, the ruling was postponed until December 3, conveniently after the November 25 elections. Taschereau returned to power with a slim six-seat majority.

During that campaign, the Union Nationale party headed by Maurice Duplessis had insisted on the immediate repeal of the Jewish exemption clause. This helped to win the clergy's endorsement of the Union Nationale. Taschereau bowed to the politically inevitable. By declaring that he really had no objections to repealing the exemption, he hung on to some of his followers ready to defect to the growing Union Nationale.⁴⁶ The Jewish exemption clause was repealed on 10 June 1936.⁴⁷ The disintegration of the

⁴⁴ National Archives of Canada, RG13 A2, vol. 400, file 406, "Memo ... for Mr. Edwards," 12 July 1934.

⁴⁵ For the arguments, NAQ, E17-989, file 3836, "Mémoire soumis par Maitre Antonio Perrault" and "Mémoire soumis par Mtre. L.E. Beaulieu, soutenant la négative." Perrault had practised his Sunday arguments in Archambault's 1927 book, *Le Repos Dominical*.

⁴⁶ JPA, 43-1,64, *L'Action Catholique*, 3 May 1935, "Débat sur l'observance du dimanche dans la province. M. Jean-Paul Sauvé présente une motion pour faire disparaître l'article légal ..."; JPA, 43-1,72, *Le Devoir*, 4 December 1935, "L'arrêt de la Cour d'appel au sujet du privilège juif ..."; JPA, 43-1,73, *Le Devoir*, 5 December 1935, "La question du travail des Juifs, le dimanche. M. Taschereau n'aurait aucune objection à voter le rappel de l'article 7"; 44-4,166, de la Rochelle to Taschereau, 23 May 1935; *Statutes of the Province of Quebec*, 1 Ed. VIII, ch.4, "An Act to repeal Section 7 of the Sunday Observance Act"; Dupont, preface; Rome, 1936, pp. 25A, 26A.

⁴⁷ The Jewish exemption clause is discussed at length in Paul Laverdure, "Sunday Secularism? The Lord's Day Debate of 1906" *Canadian Society of Church History. Papers* 1986, pp. 85-107.

Quebec Liberal Party, the stress of a declining majority in the legislature, and perhaps the abandonment of principles for which he had previously fought led Taschereau to resign the next day.

Against the factories, against the movies, and against the Jews, Quebec's Ligue du Dimanche had successfully applied encyclical, pastoral, and sermon to form a united Catholic Action movement. Joseph-Papin Archambault educated a Catholic laity, organized it, affiliated it with Catholic organizations across Quebec, inspired it and, leading from behind, urged it to create a Catholic Quebec. The Ligue du Dimanche used Duplessis against an aging, weakening Liberal government to legislate the morals of a Quebec nation in which Catholicism and the Ten Commandments would form the constitution of the nation. Instead, Duplessis successfully used the Ligue as one of his tools in gaining power.

The similarities of Quebec's experiences to early battles by the Lord's Day Alliance are striking. Catholic Action groups were rather like English Canada's social gossellers in using government power for religious ends.⁴⁸ Ironically, too, the democratic creation of a Catholic Christian day of rest, like Canada's Lord's Day, also meant the coercion of dissident Christians and Jews. Those who refused to comply with the law were prosecuted and fined or jailed. The Ligue du Dimanche was a youthful, Quebec version of the Lord's Day Alliance, willing to do battle with all and sundry for Christian civilization. In the interests of uniformity within Quebec, the provincial Sunday law of Quebec had been shorn of the Jewish exemption clause which had distinguished Quebec from the rest of Canada. In the first half of the twentieth century, Quebec's Catholic Action paralleled the Canadian Protestant social gospel battles to create a uniform, righteous and sabbatarian nation.⁴⁹ Maurice Duplessis gained power with the help of the Sunday law issue. Yet, under Duplessis, although Sunday morning activities were prosecuted so that religious services were the only activities permitted, no prosecutions were allowed against afternoon activities. The theatres slowly reopened and the pulp and paper companies went on their unimpeded way. In 1936, complaints against the mills doubled. In 1937, the complaints doubled again to over 120 cases. The factories claimed industrial necessity. Price Brothers Paper Company ignored the law in 1937 and, in 1938, was fined fifty dollars under the Lord's Day Act.⁵⁰ Recognizing that the penalties

⁴⁸ Everett C. Hughes, "Action Catholique and Nationalism: A *Memorandum on the Church and Society in French Canada, 1942*," *Religion in Canadian Society*, eds., Stewart Crysedale and Les Wheatcroft (Toronto: 1976), pp. 173-90.

⁴⁹ Richard Allen, *The Social Passion. Religion and Social Reform in Canada 1914-28* (Toronto: 1971), p. xxiii, noted certain similarities between the two movements.

⁵⁰ For indexes, NAQ, E17-1487, "Index 1936" and E17-1489, "Index 1937"; Price Bros.: E17-1286, file 3515, 8 Avril 1938.

needed to be increased, the Ligue turned to the federal parliament. A private member's bill was amended almost out of existence.⁵¹ Neither the federal nor the Duplessis government wanted to hamper companies bringing in needed capital and jobs during the 1930s. The Sunday law inspectors' salaries went unpaid. Duplessis became unavailable for Ligue interviews. His assistant instructed the inspectors to ignore the major companies and concentrate on closing small businesses, such as pool halls, in the towns, during Mass times.⁵² The Ligue du dimanche had to content itself with prosecuting weak minorities, such as the Jews.

Prophetically, Chicoutimi's Monseigneur Eugene Lapointe castigated the Ligue for allowing itself to be deflected from its original mission against the inhuman pulp and paper mills employing thousands of Roman Catholics. Why did the Ligue insist on wasting its time in pointless Jew-baiting? The Jews were not the problem.⁵³ He said: "We are deluding ourselves when we say that we have won anything in this 20-year struggle against Sunday work. We have won nothing, or so little that it might as well be nothing. The present situation, this Depression, caused less Sunday work. That's all!"⁵⁴

As the 1930s slipped by, and the failure of the Sunday campaign became more apparent, fewer members attended the Ligue du Dimanche meetings. People resigned to join other crusades, such as the one against communism.⁵⁵ Of the original members, only Archambault was left and he was often busy with other meetings, retreats, and "Semaines Sociales." Few fought 'atheistic communism' and 'anarcho-jewish socialism' with the same fervour as did Archambault and his retreatants. Overall, Quebec's national Sunday became much less important than the struggle against 'Jewish-inspired' communism being waged in Franco's Spain, Mussolini's Italy, and Hitler's Germany.

All that remained to defend Quebec's hothouse sabbatarianism was a skeleton organization that met weekly, then monthly, then seasonally. The Duplessis government had been elected with the help of Sunday votes, yet the people of Quebec continued to work on Sundays, go to the hockey games,

⁵¹ Debates of the House of Commons (1937) pp. 1758, 2405, 2599, (1938) pp. 104, 835, 837, 2639, 4351-2, (1939) pp. 137, 1301-6, 1643; press clippings in JPA, 41-13.

⁵² JPA, 35-4,77, Arthur LaRue to de la Rochelle, 29 October 1936; NAQ, E17-1241, file 515, Assistant Procurer General reply to the Report of the Inspector for Trois-Rivières, 6 September 1938.

⁵³ JPA, 34-5,23, Lapointe to Adélard Dugré, SJ, 7 October 1923: "It is not the little Jew on the Main as much as 'Laurentide', 'Price Bros' and all those of the same ilk." [my translation].

⁵⁴ JPA, 35-3,89, Lapointe to de la Rochelle, 10 October 1934 [my translation].

⁵⁵ JPA, 38-4,66, Jules Dorion, "Le Dimanche et sa semaine," *L'Action Catholique*, 5 May 1937.

sometimes to the theatre, and occasionally stopped at the shop after Sunday Mass. The Ligue du Dimanche had gone into the political arena and, to defeat the Liberal government, had transferred its hopes, its moral authority, and its power to the Duplessis government. Now they were left with nothing as the Duplessis government and the people of Quebec ignored the Ligue du Dimanche in favour of other, more pressing secular problems. By 1937, Quebec went to work or play on Sunday, much as it had done in 1907 after the passage of the Lord's Day Act. Organized Roman Catholic sabbatarianism was a short-lived movement in Quebec.