

T H E

MISCELLANEOUS DOCUMENTS

OF THE

SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES

FOR THE

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IN THE SENATE OF THE UNITED STATES.

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SUNDAY REST BILL.

Notes of a hearing before the Committee on Education and Labor, United States Senate, Thursday, December 13, 1888, on the bill (S. 2983) entitled "A bill to secure to the people the enjoyment of the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's day, as a day of rest, and to promote its observance as a day of religious worship."

THURSDAY, December 13, 1888.

The committee met at 10 o'clock a. m. in the Senate reception room.

Present: Senators Blair (chairman), Palmer, Wilson, Call, and Payne.

There appeared before the committee Rev. Wilbur F. Crafts, of New York City; General A. S. Diven, of Elmira, N. Y.; Rev. F. W. Conrad, D. D., of Philadelphia, Pa.; Rev. Byron Sunderland, D. D., and Rev. George Elliott, of the city of Washington, a committee of the American Sabbath Union; and Mrs. J. C. Bateham, of Ohio, national superintendent of Sabbath Observance department of the Woman's Christian Temperance Union; Hon. G. P. Lord, of Illinois; Rev. T. P. Stevenson, D. D., of Philadelphia, corresponding secretary of the National Reform Association; Rev. A. H. Lewis, D. D., editor of the Outlook and Sabbath Quarterly; Prof. Herrick Johnson, D. D., of Chicago; Rev. C. H. Payne, D. D., of New York; Prof. Alonzo T. Jones, of Battle Creek College, Michigan; John B. Wolff, Prof. D. B. Wilson, D. D., of Pittsburgh; Rev. John N. Stearns, secretary of the National Temperance Society; Rev. O. R. Hunt, of Iowa; Rev. Stephen M. Haskell, of Massachusetts; John B. Wood, Louis Schade, and others.

The CHAIRMAN: The hearing is upon Senate bill No. 2983, which is as follows:

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, That no person, or corporation, or agent, servant, or employé of any person or corporation shall perform or authorize to be performed any secular work, labor, or business to the disturbance of others, works of necessity, and mercy, and humanity excepted; nor shall any person engage in any play, game, or amusement, or recreation to the disturbance of others on the first day of the week, commonly known as the Lord's day, or during any part thereof, in any Territory, district, vessel, or place subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of the United States; nor shall it be lawful for any person or corporation to receive pay for labor or service performed or rendered in violation of this section.

SEC. 2. That no mails or mail matter shall hereafter be transported in time of peace over any land postal-route, nor shall any mail matter be collected, assorted, handled, or delivered during any part of the first day of the week: *Provided*, That whenever any letter shall relate to a work of necessity or mercy, or shall concern the health, life, or decrease of any person, and the fact shall be plainly stated upon the face of the envelope containing the same, the Postmaster-General shall provide for the transportation of

Senator PALMER. Only relatively. I doubt whether Congress has any right to make an arbitrary restriction.

Mr. DIVEN. No; but they have, I think, a right to put a limit upon the transportation charges.

The CHAIRMAN. When it is an interstate commerce question it can be regulated.

Senator PALMER. The Interstate Commerce Commission does not go into the rates, I understand, but only into the relation of rates.

The CHAIRMAN. I think Congress has the power to regulate rates, but I know gentlemen who think it has not.

REMARKS BY REV. T. P. STEVENSON.

Mr. CRAFTS. Rev. T. P. Stevenson, D. D., corresponding secretary of the National Reform Association, will now address the committee.

Mr. STEVENSON. Mr. Chairman, the society which I represent is one which has been organized to maintain all existing Christian features in the American Government, and to maintain and promote the connection between the American Government and the Christian religion. Consequently this question lies within the field of our work.

Let me say that the law of God as we seek to have it regarded in our country does not simply require the observance of the Sabbath, though that is one point of view. From another point of view the law of God protects the rights of men to the Sabbath. It is the boon which God has given to the toiling world, this exemption on one day from the curse of labor. The yoke of toil on one day is lifted away. The whole constitution of the world, our social life, and even the material forces and substances that we deal with, have been conformed to that law.

So experience has proven that men do not gain but lose by unremitting toil, and that more is accomplished, industrially and financially, by the observance of that law of rest than is accomplished by continuous labor.

The Constitution of the United States throws its safeguard around one eminent personage in our land, exempting him from the necessity of labor on that day. The President of the United States has one day in seven guaranteed to him free from the necessity of considering public business under the Constitution of the United States.

The whole frame-work of our Government has been arranged so as to secure exemption from work on that day for nearly all the officials of the Government. On two memorable occasions in the year 1828 the American Congress was constrained to adjourn on Sabbath morning. The vote to adjourn having been twice defeated by the casting vote of the presiding officer, Congress was constrained to adjourn by the protest of members, who contended that they would not remain there unless compelled by force, and that there was no power or law to compel attention to the public service on the Lord's day.

It is a fundamental principle in republican institutions that the rights of the humblest are as sacred as the rights of the most elevated, and the same authority—the power of the Government—which guards by its fundamental law the right of the President of the United States to one day of rest in seven ought to be exerted to guard the rights of all classes of our citizens. The two millions referred to here who are engaged in needless secular labor on the Sabbath day, most of them unwilling laborers, constitute an interest which ought to be the care of the Government and of legislation.

So we plead this as a question of rights. The American Republic had its birth in a contest for rights, and the noblest passages of our history have been those in which we have been involved in struggles for the maintenance and preservation of human rights.

We present this as a broad question of rights, the right of men, an inalienable right under the ordinances and appointments of our Creator, to one day of rest in seven. That amounts to one whole year in every seven years, seven whole years in every forty-nine, free for the highest uses, the highest ends of humanity.

The CHAIRMAN. Upon what ground do you base your claim that this Sunday rest is an inalienable right, like the right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness?

Mr. STEVENSON. On the ground that it is a right given by the Creator of men and clearly revealed in His Word to all the children of men, just as the right to life and liberty.

I wish to present one point more. I refer to the recent movement on the part of the Government of Belgium. A report presented before the Belgian Parliament in the legislative chambers, by the minister for railways and the postal service, indicates the reforms towards which the Government there is striving. He says:

In the great railway workshops, where thousands of hands are employed in effecting repairs, all work has ceased to be done on the Sabbath, save in urgent cases where the heads of such departments have to justify their proceedings to the directors.

I have found, from strict statistical inquiries, that without interfering in the slightest way with commercial requirements, two hundred and fifty goods trains could be withdrawn on the Sabbath.

With regard to the post-office here in Brussels, we have ten deliveries a day, and we compel the postmen to continue this drudgery on the seventh day of the week likewise. Are we not bound, on the score of humanity and justice, to allow these men a little time for rest of body and quiet of mind? I propose to arrange matters in such a way that all correspondence shall be delivered in the morning, with two or three supplementary distributions during the day in the principal centers, so that no interest shall suffer seriously.

We have, as yet, no general distribution of mail by carriers in any American city, and it seems that these timely reforms which the Belgian minister has proposed we might anticipate in this country by the abrogation of the Sunday mail service, the discontinuance of Sunday mail trains, and of all kindred violations of the Sabbath.

The CHAIRMAN. Do you claim, from your stand-point, that the entire day, from midnight on Saturday until midnight on Sunday, should be observed?

Mr. STEVENSON. We claim that the entire day, one-seventh of the time, should be observed.

The CHAIRMAN. You place it on the ground of sacred obligation?

Mr. STEVENSON. Yes, sir; that the law of God in reference to the Sabbath is a law that binds nations and governments as well as individuals. We are unable to see how a nation or a government has any right to disregard the moral obligation of the Sabbath law.

Senator PALMER. You state that there is one person in the United States to whom is guaranteed exemption from labor on the Sabbath, namely, the President. Is that guaranteed to him by any phraseology in the Constitution?

Mr. STEVENSON. Yes, sir; the Constitution provides that the President shall have "ten days, Sundays excepted," for the consideration of any bill presented to him.

Mr. CALL. How about other matters besides bills?

Mr. STEVENSON. My point is that that establishes the principle, and that in consistency the Government of the United States ought to carry

out the same principle, as far its authority extends, in behalf of the humblest individual in the land.

The CHAIRMAN. Really, as a matter of argument, because of course you advance it seriously, can that be held to be in any sense more than a provision that the President is to have ten days, which everybody concedes to be days on which it is proper to work? He may conscientiously be opposed to work upon the Sabbath. Is not that simply this, that he shall have ten days when everybody is of opinion that he can work, and the seventh day he may work or not as he pleases in the consideration of bills?

Mr. STEVENSON. Certainly. That is my understanding.

The CHAIRMAN. It saves his right of conscience as well as other people's.

Mr. STEVENSON. I think that is precisely the meaning of the clause. It saves his right of conscience in the matter.

Mr. CALL. But how about the President's other duties? The legislative portion is a small part of the Executive duties. What provision of the Constitution is there that exempts the President from performing any other duties on Sunday?

Mr. STEVENSON. There is nothing.

The CHAIRMAN. He still might enforce the law in case of necessity to preserve public order. The laws are not suspended on the Sabbath. Is there any other point you wish to make?

Mr. STEVENSON. I submit the following document:

THE NATIONAL MAIL SERVICE AND THE SABBATH.

By the Rev. T. P. STEVENSON.

The American people are asked to unite in securing the discontinuance of the national mail service on the first day of the week, commonly called the Lord's Day. Certain forms of petition looking to this result will be found below.

In the present discussion of this question, it is assumed:

- (1) That the law of God requires the observance of one day in seven as a day of rest and worship, and that this law is of permanent and universal obligation.
- (2) That the human body and the human mind, as well as the beasts of burden and even the inanimate world, are so constituted as to require this weekly period of rest or change of occupation. The health and longevity of mankind are promoted, and the wealth of the community increases faster where the Sabbath is observed. The privilege, therefore, of devoting one whole day in seven to the interests of man's spiritual nature, without material loss and even with material advantage, is one of the greatest boons which the Creator has bestowed on our race. The right to this weekly rest is one of the most sacred rights of humanity. Whatever infringes on or imperils it strikes at the foundations of individual and public welfare.

- (3) Since the weekly Sabbath is at once the great witness for the rights of God, and the great opportunity for religious instruction, it follows that morality and religion can not long survive among any people its overthrow or abandonment.

- (4) The law of the Sabbath is binding on nations and governments as well as on individual men. This obligation has been recognized through our whole history by the general cessation of business in our courts and legislatures, and in all other departments of government on the first day of the week, and by the enactment of laws, in every State save one, to restrain and punish the desecration of the Lord's Day.

- (5) The transportation and delivery of the public mails on that day can not be justified by any sound plea of necessity, especially in these days when the electric telegraph supplies the means of almost instantaneous communication and is ordinarily employed for all urgent messages. This was admirably presented once in a memorial of Glasgow workmen, asking for the release of public servants employed in connection with the postal and telegraph service on the Sabbath:

"Letters delivered on the Sabbath must have been posted not later than the previous day, so that telegrams forwarded on Saturday instead of them would have been delivered on the self-same day, and long before such letters; and letters posted on Sabbath are not delivered sooner than Monday, so that telegrams transmitted betimes on Monday morning instead of them would be received as soon as such letters. And

therefore a total cessation throughout the entire Sabbath from all postal work would not necessitate the transmission or delivery even of *telegrams* on that sacred day."

The national mail service on the Sabbath is therefore a violation of the law of God, and, although of long-standing, is inconsistent with the established institutions and best traditions of the American Government.

This document is addressed to those who are believed to feel and acknowledge the force of the foregoing considerations.

EXTENT OF THE EVIL.

The amount of labor performed on the Sabbath in connection with the mail service has greatly increased within the last few years, and is steadily and rapidly increasing. The great railroad lines are extending their connections, absorbing shorter roads, extinguishing local control, and welding them into great "systems" under distant management. Along all these through or trunk lines the mails are regularly carried on the Lord's day. The number of towns at which the mail is delivered, and the number of hours during which the post-offices are kept open on the Sabbath, are being constantly increased, and these post-offices are being increasingly resorted to by the public, and even by Christian people, on that day.

It has been commonly supposed that our great cities were the centers and seats of all those influences which are most powerfully prejudicial to a right observance of the day of rest. But, in the matter of the mail service, the desecration of the Sabbath is spreading far more rapidly in the rural districts than in cities. A very small proportion of the residents of cities ever go to the post-office. Their letters and papers are delivered by carriers at their homes. As there is no delivery by carriers on the Sabbath, there is no reception of mail matter on that day by the great majority of the citizens. We are well aware how soon and how sadly all this may be changed by the establishment of deliveries on the Lord's day in our cities, but the only efforts put forth in this direction heretofore have been successfully resisted. The extension of the mail service, however, on that day to interior towns has been followed there by a flood-tide of secular influences which are rapidly destroying all sense of the sanctity and peculiar obligation of the Lord's day.

Partial statistics have been gathered as to the amount of work done in the principal post-offices of the country on the Sabbath. That at Chicago may be cited as an example:

	Week days.	Sab- baths.		Week days.	Sab- baths.
Lamp-post box collections	3 to 7	2	Mails in	75	26
Deliveries by carriers	2 to 5	none	Mails out	79	24
Work hours	10	5	Total mails handled	154	50
Employees working	481	451	General delivery, open hours ...	14	1

Although, as appears from this table, there is no delivery by carriers in Chicago on the Sabbath, yet the same letter informs us that the three hundred and seventeen carriers must go to the post-office on that day to prepare the mails which come in for delivery on Monday morning. And we see that of four hundred and eighty-one employees, only thirty have the Sabbath to themselves.

RELATION TO OTHER EVILS.

If any one will glance at a complete railroad map of the United States and see the net-work of railways that lies on the land like the meshes of a spider's web, and will think of the endless procession of trains, passenger and freight, moving night and day along these arteries of travel and commerce, and will then remember that this system, to a large extent, continues its operations without regard to the Sabbath, he will form some conception of the magnitude of the evil which confronts us.

The number of passenger trains entering and leaving the Broad street station of the Pennsylvania Railroad in Philadelphia every Sabbath is about one hundred and forty-eight. The number varies from year to year, and at different seasons of the year, but the tendency is steadily toward the increase of the business done on the Sabbath. This is altogether exclusive of the freight business. The whole business is criminal. It is in plain violation of the law of God and of the laws of the States, and is, in almost every case, without excuse. The law of God is simply ignored. The laws of the Commonwealth are overridden because the penalties provided a hundred years ago are insufficient to restrain the great corporations of to-day, because the legislatures

refuse to increase them, and because the officers of the Government and the general public are indifferent to the enforcement of the law. But the whole nation is involved in the guilt of this vast system of Sabbath desecration through the action of the General Government in its demand upon the railroads for mail service on the Sabbath.

These facts are closely connected with this other momentous fact, that within five or ten years the great newspapers in nearly all our cities have begun the publication of regular editions on the Sabbath, and are making strenuous exertions to push them into wide circulation. Multitudes are not aware with what energy this assault upon the sanctity of the Sabbath is pressed, or at how many points. Some idea may be gained by observing that a single great newspaper is doing to extend the circulation of its Sunday issue. Many of the principal summer resorts are, like Saratoga and Newport, at points somewhat removed from the great arteries of travel, and the local roads which reach them do not run on the Sabbath. In order to place the Sunday Tribune in advance of all other New York papers in the hands of the multitudes thronging the hotels at Saratoga, its proprietors have for two years been running a train exclusively for this purpose, from New York to Schenectady, in advance of the mail and at a speed, in some places, of 6 miles in five minutes. At Schenectady the papers have heretofore been thrown to a pony express which completed the journey to Saratoga Springs. This year (1885), the newspaper has secured the service of a special engine on the Delaware and Hudson Railroad—hitherto, we believe, a strictly Sabbath-keeping road.

To Newport the Tribune has been carried on the Sabbath by a series of expresses in which several men successively took part. A swift horse carried the load in a light wagon from Narragansett Ferry to a point on the bay where a yacht was waiting, with sails raised to receive it. The course from this point to Newport was not a clear one. There was an island to cross. The bundles were hurried across in another vehicle, and received on the other side by another yacht which conveyed them to their destination. Greater speed and an earlier delivery have this year been secured by a slightly different route. Narragansett Pier, and Watch Hill, and Hartford, and New London, and other points in Connecticut and Rhode Island, Richfield Springs and the Catskills in New York, the Delaware Water Gap, Stroudsburg, and other places in Pennsylvania, have been reached by the same paper by similar means.

From the efforts thus made to reach points to which the mails are not yet available, we can readily infer the eager pressure which is exerted on the postal authorities to quicken and extend the mail service on the Sabbath for their benefit. Without the opportunity afforded by this service to reach a wide circle of readers, these Sabbath-breaking newspaper enterprises would not have been undertaken. Their very existence, with their illimitable influence for evil, is chargeable to the mail facilities furnished by the Government, and they, in turn, react powerfully on the Government to stimulate and extend the evil which creates their opportunity.

The example of the metropolitan journals, in this respect, is being followed by the newspapers in cities of the second class, until it is now estimated that there are nearly 500 newspapers in the United States which are issued seven days in the week. Every one of these is dependent, more or less, on the United States mail service for opportunity to reach its patrons. Every one of these exerts its influence to enlarge the area of that service on the Sabbath. To this whole vast system of Sabbath-breaking the national Government, through its mail service, becomes a consenting and contributing party. The "Sunday" newspapers, the United States mail service, and the railroads, constitute a triple unholy alliance against the right observance of the day of rest by the American people. The Government, in this matter, throws the weight of its august example against the interests of religion and good morals. The Sabbath mail service is even more demoralizing than other forms of Sabbath-breaking, because it is the act of the Government itself, while they are illegal—existing in defiance of law. These facts constitute a veritable crisis in the history of the country, and set before the people one of the gravest problems which they have ever been called to consider.

EFFECTS ON MORALS AND RELIGION.

The sanction of law reconciles many consciences to what would otherwise be seen to be great evils. Testimony carefully gathered from various sections of the country reveals the fact that the local post-office open on the Sabbath is a sluice-gate through which a flood of secular reading and correspondence pours into even Christian homes. Over wide sections of the country the arrival of the Sabbath morning mail from the city is the signal for the resort of multitudes to the post-office. Christian men and women, on their way to and from the sanctuary, swell the throng. The afternoon of the day is surrendered to secular things. The step to common labor on the Sabbath, on some plea of necessity, is not a long one. The rapid multiplication of Sabbath-breaking occupations in all our centers of population is a legitimate outgrowth of this planting. The three allied forces referred to above are eating like a canker into Sabbath-keeping principles and practices even of the professedly

Christian public. There is no other point at which Sabbath-breaking customs so successfully invade the lives and the homes of Christian people, and no other at which resistance and protest are more greatly needed.

It requires no prophetic gift to foresee the consequences which must flow from the continued operation of these forces. As public sentiment learns to tolerate and to demand this supply of secular reading on the Sabbath, all the instrumentalities of diffusing it will be enlarged and extended. The number of post-offices permitted to remain closed on the Sabbath will steadily diminish. The number of persons who will consent to receive, or will demand, their mail on the Sabbath, will continually increase. The demand for the delivery of letters from house to house in cities on the Sabbath will be renewed and granted. Stores and counting-rooms will gradually be thrown open that the letters thus delivered may be received and answered. Open for this purpose, other business will be transacted. Express companies will be urged to receive and forward parcels of goods for which the Sabbath morning mail brings pressing orders. Merchants who would prefer to respect the Sabbath will grow restive under the seeming advantages gained by conscienceless competitors.

Christian principle, weakened by small concessions and undermined by treacherous currents on every side, will gradually cease its resistance, save in the bosoms of a few who will hold to the precepts of God's law and the memories of better days; and the Sabbath of the Lord, the Sabbath of our fathers, the Sabbath whose due observance is the chief pillar of national virtue and welfare, will be to all appearance lost in a rushing tide of lust for pleasure and lust for gain. With the loss of the Sabbath religion will perish; for history and the word of God bear witness that faith in things unseen will not long survive where the Sabbath, God's chief witness among men, has ceased to give its testimony. The natural, almost inevitable, effect of the maintenance of religious forms and usages while the habitual violation of the moral law is tolerated, will be a harvest, first of formalism, and then of unbelief.

Infidelity and irreligion will sweep over the land; churches will be neglected; the great evangelistic agencies of to-day, which are leavening our own and other lands with the gospel, will be shorn of their strength; the children of those who throng our sanctuaries to-day will become infidels and worldlings; our schools and colleges, perverted to secular education, will be seminaries of atheism; and only as she is scourged back to God and to duty by terrible judgments, can it be hoped that the nation will recover the advantage which to-day she is so wantonly casting away. Even if there be small hope of immediate success, effort against these on-coming evils will not be lost. It will have a valuable effect on the church and on the public, quickening Christian consciences, restraining many from falling into the use of the Sabbath mails, and so tending to prevent an increase of the evil.

FORMER ACTION OF CONGRESS.

A powerful incentive to effort in this behalf is found in the action which has formerly been taken by Congress.

In the years 1828-29 numerous petitions against the mail service on the Sabbath were sent up from no less than twenty-one different States. These petitions were supported by powerful arguments. In one it was reasoned:

"During the session of Congress in 1828 (on the 12th of May and the 8th of July) the House was not permitted to proceed with business on Sabbath morning by reason of the steady and firm resistance of a large number of members who refused to recognize the propriety of proceeding with their ordinary business on that day. The votes for adjournment were nearly equally divided, and more than once lost by the casting vote of the chair. Members then declared that they would leave the House and not return before Monday morning, unless brought in by force, and very properly contended that no authority existed to compel their attendance on the Lord's Day; and the House on both occasions was compelled to adjourn. * * * Now, since those men would not consent to labor a few hours on one or two Sabbaths in a year, with what consistency can they compel many thousands of their constituents to labor every Sabbath in the year?"

"Among the amendments to the Constitution, and equally binding, is the following—Article I.: 'Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or to prohibit the free exercise thereof.' Now place beside this the clause: 'And it shall be the duty of the postmaster, at all reasonable hours, on every day of the week, to deliver on demand any letter, or paper, or packet, to the person entitled to or authorized to receive the same,' and see whether a conscientious Christian can be a postmaster and at the same time enjoy the free exercise of his religion. If Congress have a right to require such labor, can it not require many other things contrary to the Christian religion, as that every member of Congress, of the Executive, and every officer of the General Government, shall on every day of the week attend to the duties of his appointment, until every Christian shall be excluded from office? But would not such laws prohibit the free exercise of religion, and be unequal and unconstitutional?"

Would not this be as effectual a 'religious test' as to require a belief in a particular system of religion as a qualification for office? * * * But if the clause complained of be not a violation of that instrument (the Constitution), it is against the constitution of heaven. And what people ever prospered legislating against God?"

The action of Congress upon these petitions is embodied in a report prepared by Richard M. Johnson, of Kentucky, and presented in the Senate January 19, 1829. The general tenor of this report is to the effect that the American Government can not, consistently with its own character, take any cognizance of the law of God as a reason for its public acts. In that report occur such sentences as these:

"Your committee look in vain to the national Constitution for a delegation of power authorizing Congress to inquire and determine what part of time, or whether any part of time, has been set apart by the Almighty for religious exercises. * * * The committee might here rest the argument on the ground that the question referred to them does not come within the cognizance of Congress. * * * However suitable such inquiries and decisions might be to an ecclesiastical council, they are incompatible with a Republican legislature, which is purely for political and not for religious purposes. * * * It is the opinion of the committee that the subject should be regarded simply as a question of expediency, irrespective of its religious bearings. In this light it has hitherto been considered. Congress has never legislated on the subject. It rests, as it has ever done, in the legal discretion of the Postmaster-General, under the repeated refusals of Congress to discontinue the Sabbath mails."

The decision then reached remains to-day as the latest decision, and the report which recommended it as the latest utterance of the American Congress on the subject to which it refers. For fifty-one years it has stood without reply and without protest. It is constantly appealed to by the enemies of all Christian features in our Government. It gives aid and encouragement continually to those who are laboring to break down the safeguards of the day of rest. The struggle with the slave power, the war with the rebellion, the reconstruction measures, the temperance conflict, have absorbed the attention of the Christian public to the neglect and exclusion, in large measure, of the whole Sabbath question. But many circumstances—none more than its vital connection with the temperance reform—are combining now to bring it into prominence. Its renewed discussion can not long be postponed. It ought not to be postponed for a day. And can any better point be found at which to resume the discussion than that at which it was broken off fifty-five years ago—the national mail service and the Sabbath? Ought that report and that decision to remain any longer on the records of the Government, and to operate as they are still operating in the minds of the people, without reargument and without protest? Whatever the issue of the present effort, it can not make the situation worse than it is to-day. Nothing could be worse than the last recorded decision of the Government, in the terms of the above report.

THE RIGHTS INVOLVED.

The American people are jealous of interference with individual or public rights. They have good reason for this jealousy. This nation had its birth in a contest for rights. Our gravest controversies since have been for the vindication of human rights. Nations are powers ordained of God for the maintenance of rights, and the nation which fails or refuses to maintain these will be thrown aside like a bow which shoots deceitfully. What rights are involved in this question?

(1) The rights of God, the Creator, the Author of the Sabbath law, are trampled on and disregarded by all unnecessary secular labor on that day. This argument is of force only to those who believe in the divine obligation of the Sabbath. But these constitute, we believe, a majority of the American people.

(2) The rights of the Christian majority of our population are violated when the action of the Government is hostile or injurious to the interests of the Christian religion. The church in America has relinquished much of that claim to national favor and assistance which in other lands it has been thought well to maintain. But the American Government can not set itself in open opposition to Christianity, while the majority of the people are Christians, without violence to their most sacred rights. The people have the right to demand that the money which they pay to the support of the Government shall not be used to overthrow and break down the system of faith and morals which they hold most dear.

(3) The rights of officials and employes of the Post-Office Department are violated by the mail service on the Sabbath. The right to one day in seven—and that the day fixed by custom, by statute, and by the law of God—for rest and for worship is one of the most sacred rights of humanity. It is a right inalienable by any action of the individual or of society. No man has the right to sell his labor on the Sabbath. No man, no body of men, have the right to hire another man to work on the Sabbath. No community, no Government, has the right to establish regulations which interfere with any man's right to the Sabbath. All such regulations are oppressive, and

expose the authorities which enact them to the displeasure of Him who regardeth the cry of the oppressed. The only exception which can be admitted is "works of necessity and mercy." The claim of the mail service to the cover of this exception has already been examined. It has been estimated that 150,000 persons in the United States are deprived of the whole or a part of every Sabbath, to attend to the carriage and distribution of the mails. All these persons are compelled to choose between the loss of employment and the performance of secular labor on the Lord's Day. When the Christian people of the United States have considered this subject they will demand that this system of oppression shall cease.

THE WHOLE NATION RESPONSIBLE.

The action of the Government in this matter involves the whole nation in guilt and exposes the whole people to the righteous judgments of God. No man can say, "I never used the mails on the Sabbath; I am therefore not responsible." When irreligion and vice unsettle the foundations of social welfare, no man can assure himself that his personal or domestic interests will not be imperiled. When Israel went into captivity "that this land might enjoy her Sabbaths," the whole people suffered. A nation is justly held responsible for the action of its Government, because the nation is greater than the Government, and can reform it at pleasure. The violation of the Sabbath by the mail service involves in guilt not merely the officials in charge of the Post-Office Department, but the American people. The people have direct, legitimate, and, in some sense, authoritative access to the Government. Those who desire or would insist on the continuance of the Sabbath mail service, in the face of such considerations as we have urged, are a small minority of the population. It is only necessary for the people to speak; the Government will obey their voice.

THE PRESENT EFFORT AGAINST THIS EVIL.

The National Reform Association which issues this document was organized some years ago, among other purposes, "to maintain existing Christian features in the American Government, and to promote needed reforms in the action of the Government touching the Sabbath, the institution of the family, the religious element in education, the oath," etc. This work, therefore, since it concerns the action of the Government, lies within the proper field of this association. The list of officers appended below attests its representative, unsectarian, and thoroughly national character. It seeks, in this effort, to co-operate with and to supplement the labors of any other committees or associations which are seeking the same end. Its officers and members are deeply sensible of the gravity of the question at issue, and of the earnestness of the controversy which will arise upon it. But they believe the hour is ripe for the renewed discussion of this subject, and, with God's help, they will not falter in the task until the matter shall be settled in accordance with the law of God.

They hope, moreover, that this will prove to be but one part of a great work of Sabbath reformation, embracing many other practical questions and bearing all forward to a right and permanent settlement. Every such issue raises the whole question of the obligation and right observance of the day of rest. The discussion of one such issue assists the discussion of every other. The neglect of any one retards the consideration and settlement of all. We undertake this special work because it lies within our special field, but we feel that in so doing we are the helpful allies of all who are laboring, in any way, for the preservation of the Sabbath. And we shall succeed—not this year, nor next year, nor, perhaps, for many years. But the ultimate triumph of the Sabbath cause is among the "sure mercies" which God has promised to the church and to the world. And this, with God's blessing, we shall even now do. We shall lift this question out of general inattention and neglect, and set it on high, where it shall not again be lost sight of. We shall quicken Christian consciences, and evoke the testimony of the church, and enlist the co-operation of earnest men and women. All this will be positive and immediate gain, and will augment the forces which will ultimately determine the action of the Government.

Other organizations, too, are working for the same result. The form of petition which we subjoin was prepared some time ago by the International Sabbath Association, with the approval of the Post-Office authorities at Washington, and has been widely circulated. Some excellent documents on the subject have been issued by the same society. The Woman's Christian Temperance Union has created a department for the suppression of Sabbath desecration, and has already begun to agitate the discontinuance of the mail service on the Sabbath. All local Sabbath associations and committees will lend their aid. New friends and helpers will be found as the discussion goes on. The National Reform Association simply desires to contribute its share to the efforts which will one day secure this public and significant standing acknowledgment, by the American Government, of the obligation of the Christian Sabbath.

This document will be sent, as fast as means are secured for the purpose, to all newspapers, secular and religious; to all ministers of the gospel; to all woman's Christian temperance unions; to all Sabbath committees and associations, and to other persons and societies likely to be interested in the movement.

It will be followed from time to time by other documents, to which similar currency will be given.

Copies of the petition appended below, in suitable form for circulation, will be sent to all pastors, and to woman's Christian temperance unions, and will be furnished freely to all who will apply to the address of the corresponding secretary given below.

These petitions, as they are returned to the office of the National Reform Association, will be classified by Congressional districts, and placed in the hands of Representatives and Senators for presentation to Congress. In every case the matter will be pressed on the attention of Congressmen in personal interviews.

Those who favor the proposed measure are requested to write personal letters to their Representatives concerning it, and to defend and urge it in the columns of the public journals to which they have access.

All ecclesiastical courts and other religious assemblies, and all conventions interested in measures of reform are requested to take suitable action and forward the same to their Representatives in Congress, and to religious and other journals for publication.

On the strength of the facts and arguments set forth in this document we hope for the general and earnest co-operation of Christian citizens.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS.

For the sake of those who labor in our post-offices and in transporting the mails it is recommended that Christian men avoid, as far as possible, the mailing of letters and other matter as the Sabbath approaches. The following conversation between the editor of the Christian Instructor of this city and one of the clerks of the Philadelphia post-office, related in the issue of that journal for July 16, 1885, is suggestive:

CLERK. "I have been surprised at religious people; they are the most exacting people the laboring man has to deal with. Christian journals say that we ought to 'remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy,' etc., and yet late Saturday night some of them will bring large quantities of mail matter to the office and insist that it must be sent off immediately, and they have even come on the Sabbath with mail matter to have it sent off. Now, this compels us to work all day Sabbath just as on other days, and we get no rest."

EDITOR. "The Instructor makes it a point never to bring mail so that it will have to be handled on the Sabbath. If our mail matter is not likely to reach its destination before the Sabbath it is retained until Monday, except in the case of long distances, where it is not possible to send our mail without its being out over Sabbath."

CLERK. "Well, that is not so generally. Some of the largest religious publishing houses in the city" [here he mentioned several by name] "bring their mail late Saturday, so that it all has to be handled next day, and it just keeps us busy all day long. This kind of conduct shows a want of sincerity in church members and destroys all confidence when preachers and public leaders tell us that we must keep the Sabbath day and then compel us to break it."

The Government will be more ready to discontinue the mail service on the Sabbath if the mails are notably lighter on that day than on other days. Large business firms and publishing houses, especially, can make their influence felt in this way.

The Rev. Prof. A. Rittenhouse, of Dickinson College, Pennsylvania, in a note to the Christian Statesman, suggests that Christian men, publishers, and business firms have their letters stamped with this direction to postmasters, "This letter is not to be dispatched or delivered on the Sabbath," and adds:

"I believe that such a notice on envelopes would do good. Every one of them would be a silent protest against the Sunday mails, and letter-carriers and others who are compelled to handle mail matter on that day would hail them with gratitude."

The suggestion is judicious and practical. The effect of such a protest could not fail to be considerable, and in many quarters which could not otherwise be easily reached. There are Christian men who send out hundreds of thousands of letters every year, and who, without a farthing of expense to themselves, could in this way make every letter "a preacher of righteousness" to the Government and to the nation.

SIMILAR MOVEMENTS ABROAD.

While these pages are being prepared for the press it is announced in the foreign dispatches that the socialists of Germany have been demanding the weekly rest, though not on religious grounds, and that the Imperial Government has promised to investigate "the whole question of Sunday labor,"

The Austrian Government, it is also announced, has issued stringent regulations against any common labor on the Sabbath. In consequence of this change there have for some weeks been no newspapers in Vienna on Monday morning. The regular issues appear on the Sabbath, work is then suspended until Monday, and the papers re-appear on Tuesday morning. So welcome is the general relief from the oppression of uninterrupted toil that there has been no complaint over the omission of the Monday papers. The publication of the papers, however, on Sabbath morning is wholly indefensible. The work done on Saturday would provide for Monday's paper as well as for one published on the Sabbath. There is no necessity, as has been demonstrated by some of the most successful papers in the United States—notably the New York Journal of Commerce—for a single hour of Sabbath work on a Monday morning paper.

A similar movement in Belgium is set forth in the following extract from a speech recently delivered in the legislative chambers by the minister for railways, telegraphs, and the postal service. After reviewing the opinion of his predecessor, who had thought it unwise to attempt any change, the present minister said:

"Now, my reforms are these: In the great railway workshops, where thousands of hands are employed effecting repairs, all work has ceased to be done on the Sabbath, save in urgent cases, when the heads of such establishments have to justify their proceedings to the directors. The freight offices in the cities and larger towns are closed after the mid-day dispatch. I have found, from strict statistical inquiries, that, without interfering in the slightest way with commercial requirements, two hundred and fifty goods trains could be withdrawn on the Sabbath. With regard to the passenger-railway traffic, no curtailment will at present take place. As yet Belgium is not ripe for such a movement. A great reform, it seems to me, would be compromised by urging this prematurely. With regard to the post-office here in Brussels we have ten deliveries a day, and we compel the postmen to continue this drudgery on the seventh day of the week likewise. You all know what an estimable and thoroughly duty-going set of men our postmen are. Are we not bound on the score of humanity and justice to allow them a little time for rest of body and quiet of mind? I propose to arrange matters in such a way that all correspondence throughout the country, without exception, shall be delivered in the morning, and that at the principal centers there shall be organized two or three supplementary distributions during the day, so that no interest shall suffer seriously."

The attentive reader will see at once how far more favorable are the state of public opinion and the habits of the people in the United States than in Belgium and other European countries to the inauguration of such a reform as we propose. There the minister apologizes for and defends the reduction of deliveries by carriers on the Sabbath from 10 to 3 or 4. Here we have, as yet, no delivery by carrier in any of our cities. All the reforms he so timidly proposes, if successfully carried out, would not bring Belgium up to the point even now occupied by the American people. No considerations of expediency forbid us to take the true and consistent ground. Public sentiment here is not so far corrupted as to make it unwise to propose the entire discontinuance of the mails and of railroad traffic on the Lord's Day. Unless, however, an arrest can be placed on the growing desecration of the Sabbath by the postal service, we shall gradually conform ourselves to the European standard. We shall make progress in one direction or in the other. We shall either regain what we have lost, or we shall continue to lose. While Europe is thus struggling painfully to recover her lost Sabbath, let us lead the way in kindred efforts, and, with God's blessing, in substantial victories here.

REMARKS BY REV. F. W. CONRAD, D. D.

Mr. CRAFTS. The next representative will be Rev. F. W. Conrad, D. D., of Philadelphia, editor of the Lutheran Observer, who will speak in behalf of those Germans who love the Sabbath.

Mr. CONRAD. Mr. Chairman and gentlemen of the committee: As has been said, I am to speak concerning the views and positions of the Germans in this country, most of whom are Lutherans, on this Sabbath question.

The Germans, as you know, are a constitutionally religious people, chosen by Providence to be the agents to introduce Protestantism; but they have deteriorated, as other nations have done.

Taking the tide of emigration that has been flowing over here for more than two hundred years, from the time when the Swedes arrived