

## Our Comment

While this article does not represent the attitude of the entire Motion Picture Industry toward the Church and Sabbath (for example, in Pennsylvania where legislation to legalize Sunday movies is pending the Independent Exhibitors Protection Association, Eastern Pennsylvania, voted opposition to Sunday shows and, we are informed, the majority of the independent Exhibitors of the State are against them) it nevertheless does reflect the attitude of a large proportion of the industry. Feldman is the accredited representative of one of the largest producing and exhibiting companies of the industry. Warners has 438 theatres in 23 states, 135 of which are in Pennsylvania. The article appears in what calls itself "The Journal" of the industry, and therefore, we have the right to conclude, has the approval of Warners and Motion Picture Herald.

### Why Christian and Patriotic Citizens Should Oppose Sunday Movies

1. This article furnishes strong reasons.
2. They secularize and commercialize the Sabbath.
3. They compete with the non-commercial work of religious agencies in building the character of the people, on the Lord's Day.
4. At any hour of the day, they break down in the minds of the people the sense of the sacred character of the Lord's Day.
5. They involve many in unnecessary secular labor on the Sabbath.
6. With the shortening of the hours of labor and the increase of leisure time the people have ample opportunity to attend the movies on week days.
7. Many of the pictures shown are unfit for exhibition on week days, much less on the Lord's Day.
8. God's Command, "Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy."

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The National Reform Association

209 Ninth St.

Pittsburgh, Pa.

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# WHAT TO DO ABOUT SUNDAY SHOWS

R. H. Martin, President

The National Reform Association

Under this title an article appears in the March 16, 1935, issue of Motion Picture Herald, a leading trade magazine of the motion picture industry. It was written by Joe Feldman, advertising director, Warner Theatres, Pittsburgh Division, to be read not by the public, certainly not by Christian ministers, but by theater managers to show them how to obtain "the right to run a show on Sunday" where it is against the law. The article repeatedly refers to Pennsylvania where the state law prohibits Sunday shows and points the way to evade and nullify the law. We quote, verbatim, large portions of the article to guarantee against misrepresenting Mr. Feldman.

I. Mr. Feldman advises against "recourse to the courts."

Reasons. With a statute against Sunday movies "the court has no choice but to rule against the defendant."

"In the past year hundreds of cases of this nature brought up in the courts have resulted in the defeat of the theatre owners' efforts to open on Sunday and have succeeded only in delaying unnecessarily the opening because their first effort had the effect of solidifying ministerial opposition and making them ready and eager to defeat any further moves on the part of the theatre managers."

II. Mr. Feldman urges that the preliminary efforts for Sunday opening be made under-cover.

The theatre managers first efforts should be with individual members of the city council.

"It may take a lot of diplomacy and patience to swing the doubtful ones and to solidify your relations with the more liberal councilmen. But all the time you spend in this initial move is well spent."

His next step is to persuade the mayor.

"You will find that in most cases as long as the mayor doesn't have to personally bear the brunt of fighting your Sunday battle, he will be inclined to favor your purpose."

When this job is done he is next to contact the merchants and chamber of commerce, who, for financial reasons, will generally be for Sunday movies.

## All This Under-cover

"The first move in the direction of opening must be made as quietly as possible. Any publicity before you have definitely prepared the way will immediately crystalize opposition and make the going much tougher."

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Why does this motion picture bootlegger not advise theatre managers to go to the ministers and reason with them—praying with them if need be—to convince that Sunday movies will not militate against them and the church? He knows they are making war upon the ministers and the church. It is considered dishonorable for one nation to begin hostilities against another nation until it has first made an open declaration of war. This writer advises theatre managers against making any declaration of war but would have them steal upon their enemy—the Christian ministers—under cover of darkness and stab them in the back. A great sportsman is Joe!

This preliminary under cover work accomplished, "two courses are open to theatre managers."

III. "Announce immediately your Sunday opening, advertising it in a dignified way."

"Don't set your opening earlier than 2 o'clock and be sure that your booking is one that can cause no possible criticism on the grounds of morality."

"It is more profitable in the end to book a picture of inferior drawing power than to try to cash in at once on a sexy attraction which may blow up all of your carefully planned moves by creating public opposition."

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This motion picture "porch-climber" advises clothing the Devil in a beautiful cloak of morality and smuggling him into the Lord's Day, but once in, he can take off his cloak and put on "sexy attractions" that will enable the managers to "cash in" on Sunday shows. What an utter lack of regard for the sanctity of the Lord's Day is here revealed!

When the ministers see this announcement they will demand of the Council that the theatre be closed or of the District Attorney that the theatre manager be prosecuted. To forestall this opposition the theatre manager should secure as many signers as possible to a petition in favor of

Sunday opening. On the strength of this petition get the Council to revoke the statute against Sunday shows. Failing in this, persuade the Council to make it possible to operate Sunday shows in violation of the statute as follows:

"Or if it should be a fine so large that it would not be profitable to operate on Sunday, reduce the size of this fine to a nominal sum which the manager will then pay regularly every Sunday until the thing is forgotten about and the district attorney ceases to bring charges every week."

Nor does this exhaust the ingenuity of this selective anarchist in showing how to evade the law. The above failing, he is to conspire with the Mayor.

### IV. Close everything down tight.

"If the mayor is very friendly to you it shouldn't be difficult for you to persuade him that he can do himself no harm in announcing that he will enforce to the letter Sunday-closing laws of your community or state, which is to say, close down everything including milk deliveries, gasoline stations, ice cream parlors, etc. Merchants and public will raise a howl to the heavens. Pressure by the public on both ministers and council will force the issue. This method several months ago succeeded in opening the cities of Johnstown, Pa., and Washington, Pa., in spite of the fact that there is a state law forbidding Sunday shows."

### V. Put on a Sunday benefit.

"One of the methods of opening theatres on Sunday which has proved virtually sure fire and succeeded in opening up some of the touchest towns in Pennsylvania is as simple as it is direct. The theatre manager ties up with the most powerful organization in his community—either religious or fraternal—the American Legion, for instance, or one of the big churches in need of funds. Under this arrangement, the theatre opens under the auspices of a benefit every Sunday. The organization tied in with the theatre receives a percentage of the gross, usually running 25 per cent. If you tie in with a church organization, it is very unlikely that ministers will oppose because of the fact that they are very hesitant about raising a row against another religious body. If you have tied up with the American Legion, you will find that the political pressure influential members of this body can bring to bear will more than likely silence opposition."