

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from scanned originals with text recognition applied
(searchable text may contain some errors and/or omissions)

Legislative Record

OF THE

Seventy-Seventh Legislature

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE

1915

bers of the Senate approve of it. I am glad that the Attorney General is not dead; we hope that he will live for many years to serve the State. I have a great deal of respect for this judiciary committee. I have many friends on that committee; they are lawyers and we expect them to stand together in this matter. I expected nothing else but a unanimous report against the passage of this resolve, I am not at all surprised, but I shall be surprised if the members of this House do not stand up and be counted for what they believe to be right in this matter.

Mr. Fossett of Portland moved that the resolve be indefinitely postponed.

Mr. Perham of Woodstock moved that the previous question be ordered.

The SPEAKER: The question is on the motion of the gentleman from Woodstock that the resolve be substituted for the report of the committee. On this motion a division of the House has been called for. All those in favor of substituting the resolve for the report will rise and stand until counted.

A division was had.

The SPEAKER: Evidently the motion is lost, and unless the House requests, the count will not be returned.

On motion by Mr. Pierce the report of the committee was accepted.

Mr. DESCOTEAUX of Biddeford: Mr. Speaker, I move that the House reconsider its vote whereby House Document No. 495 was laid upon the table and assigned for tomorrow pending the acceptance of Senate Amendments A and B.

The motion prevailed.

The SPEAKER: The Chair wishes to state for the information of the House that it read the wrong amendment—the amendment that was offered in the Senate sometime since and now defeated. The gentleman from Biddeford, Mr. Descoteaux, now moves the adoption of Senate Amendment A in concurrence to House Document 495.

The motion was agreed to.

The SPEAKER: The same gentleman now moves the adoption of Senate Amendment B in concurrence.

The motion was agreed to.

Mr. LOMBARD of Old Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I wish to offer House Amendment C, as follows:

"House Amendment C. Section 1 of House Document No. 495 is hereby amended by striking out in the third line thereof the words 'or laundry.'

Mr. LOMBARD: I yield the floor to the gentleman from Portland, Mr. Roberts.

Mr. ROBERTS of Portland: Mr. Speaker, I had my attention called to this matter of laundry when at home, and it seemed to me that it would be rather unjust to include laundries. I will say that in our city a White Star Line steamer came into our port this winter with 37,000 pieces of laundry to be done in two days. The next day an Allan Line steamer came in with 15,000 pieces to be done in a day and a half. For about two or three months in the winter these things occur in our city. Then in summer, when the steamers are coming in from Boston, New York, and everywhere, for the summer business, there is equally as much. There are about two or three months in the winter, and the same in the summer, when it is practically impossible for them to do that work, though it has to be done. A laundry is almost as much a necessity as the kitchen, and it does seem that the people coming to our shores should have a chance to have their laundry work done in that way. Now these are rather extreme cases, of course. A gentleman who lives near me has built a building that cost him \$100,000, for the purpose of doing this class of work, and his people are simply delighted to have a chance to do so much work and receive their pay for it. I will say, also, that the first day of April he is making arrangements, aside from the present prices he is paying for his labor, not cutting them down at all, to distribute to them the first of October about seven and one-half per cent. in addition for their work. It seems to me that that man is pretty fair. He says, "I never have

any trouble with my help at all." It does seem to me that the laundry is simply a matter of necessity, and I do think, gentlemen, that that part relating to laundries should be left out. There is not a gentleman who does not have to patronize the laundry. In the cities we have to send our laundry away, and it will be readily seen that the laundryman cannot commence work until Monday noon, anyway. Then he must have it all done by Saturday noon for delivery. He thus has practically only five days in which to do his work. Every man wants his laundry by Saturday noon, and he cannot get it into the laundry before Monday noon. Now why not give these laundrymen a fair chance to do business? I think it due to them, and I think it is due to us, too.

Mr. WESCOTT of Bluehill: Mr. Speaker, I am very much opposed to this amendment. Everybody knows that no less distinguished class of people than the Chinamen control the laundry business in this country. So far as I am concerned, I do not pose as favoring them to the extent of going to work and exempting them from the provisions of this act. This matter was thoroughly discussed, fought out and fought down along the lines indicated by this amendment. I am against any further amendments, and I hope that the members of this House will stand by the bill as presented. It does not need any further amendment, and the laundryman can take his chances with the other fellows, I believe.

Mr. SANBORN of South Portland: Mr. Speaker, I believe that when it is proposed to exempt any class in a bill of this sort, it would be a clear case of favoritism; and it does not seem to me that laundry employees should be exempted. It has been said that steamship lines have large amounts of work to be done in Portland. Well, they may; but there are many laundries there, and, if there are not enough, I have no doubt that others will be glad to go into the business. The point is this: The female help in those laundries are certainly working under as hard conditions, it seems to me, as any employees in any business

in the State of Maine; and in this act we are legislating for the benefit of the employees, that is what is in mind, the prime motive back of this entire act. This act does not purport to consider the people who are having work done; it is the people who are employed. It is in the interest of those who are laboring, and those who are laboring under conditions which might be prejudicial to their health and comfort; and, if anybody works under hard conditions, it is those women who work in these steam-heated, over-heated, close laundries. Go past any one of them in city of Portland on any day, and observe the blast of heat that comes out when the windows and doors are open, then think of the women working inside, and tell me if, because some steamship company is in a hurry to get their clothes washed, those women ought to be compelled to work long hours, while other women in stores, in clean, light and airy places, may be limited to their nine hours! I believe that laundry employees, above all others, are the ones who should be favored by this act, and I oppose this amendment.

Mr. DESCOTEAUX of Biddeford: Mr. Speaker, the laundrymen were given a chance to appear before us, but they did not choose to come. Now in regard to exempting laundries, those people work harder than any other class. There are days in the summer when they have to go out doors to get a breath of air. I think the amendment should not be adopted.

Mr. LOMBARD of Old Orchard: Mr. Speaker, I am not opposed to a 54-hour law; but I do believe that it must be a feasible proposition and a workable bill—one that will work out well. Now here is the situation in my locality, and I think it will apply equally well to all parts of the State, particularly to summer resorts. As a matter of fact, the most of the laundry work at Old Orchard is done in Biddeford and Saco, and I will say that the work must be done in four days. This laundry is dumped into the laundries of Biddeford and Saco on Monday, and they are unable to do any work on it until Tuesday. It must be finished Friday night and delivered on

Saturday. That leaves four working days in which this work must be done. I also want to call attention to the fact that there is much irregularity in the amount received. Oftentimes they will be overwhelmed on Wednesday and Thursday, and perhaps not enough to do on Tuesday and Friday. It is this condition that we want to meet by the adoption of this amendment, and we think it will not work a great hardship. These women working in the laundries of Biddeford and Saco only get this work during the summer months, and the rest of the time the laundries can barely exist. They make their money during the summer months, and they are well paid. They are paid by the hour, and, if they work over hours, they are paid for it. I think in justice to the situation that this amendment should be adopted.

Mr. FAY of Dexter: Mr. Speaker, I did not intend to say anything on this subject. I feel that I have said previously all I should say, and I had become reconciled to the 54-hour law; but I do want to take exception to the remarks of the gentleman from South Portland, Mr. Sanborn, in which he practically said that we are not interested in those who are doing the work. I wish to say that we are only interested to see that just and equitable laws are passed both for the employer and employee. That one remark of his calls me to my feet to comment on it to that extent.

Mr. SANBORN: Mr. Speaker, I may not have expressed what was in my mind, or I may have been misunderstood. My purpose was to say that this bill did not purport to be in the interest of employers or those who want the work done, but that this measure is one for the relief of the employees. That is what I intended to say.

Mr. ROBERTS: Mr. Speaker, I rise to say that I am not opposed to the 54-hour law; but I would like to see a business that we are all interested in protected. The facts were presented to me that I have stated to you, and I thought them worth considering. I will say here to the gentleman from Bluehill (Mr. Wescott) that we have very few Chinamen in Portland; all of our large business there is done by good

American people. We have no trouble with the Chinamen in their little side laundries. These are men who are doing a nice business, and I have simply stated the matter to you in justice to my neighbor and friend as to what I think is only right and fair. I am not opposed to the 54-hour law; but I do say that there should be some exceptions in cases of necessity such as this.

Mr. McCARTY of Lewiston: I had supposed, Mr. Speaker and gentlemen, that this 54-hour bill, up to the time of the presentation of the last amendment, was a satisfactory bill to all the interests involved. Now this amendment that has been introduced here this morning seeks to except from the operation of the 54-hour bill women and minors engaged in laundries; and, so far as I am able to determine from what I have heard here, some friend or neighbor of the gentleman from Portland (Mr. Roberts) seeks to tie up this entire bill simply on the ground that it might embarrass his business in some way or other. Now I do not know of any individual in the State of Maine whose interests should be especially looked after by this Legislature. This 54-hour bill affects the entire working population so far as women and minors are concerned. Why a certain laundry in the city of Portland should come in here, and, through the mouth of one of its representatives, seek exclusion from this act, I cannot quite conceive. I am glad that that laundry down there in Portland is doing the business that we are told it is doing. I am glad that the steamships are coming in there two or three months in the winter and giving them their work to do. I am also glad that they are forced at times to work over time. But there are women working in that laundry whose interests we must seek, of far more interest to us than the question of whether or not this man might be embarrassed in the conduct of his business. There is one suggestion I am going to make to the gentleman from Portland (Mr. Roberts), and I want him to carry it back to his neighbor in whose interest he appears here this morning, and it is this: If that laundry is doing so much business that it cannot all be performed in nine hours of the day, then I am going to ask the