

## SUPREME COURT RULES AGAINST PREMIER DUPLESSIS FOR PUNISHING JEHOVAH'S WITNESS

Years ago, many people regarded the Witnesses of Jehovah as a radical Christian sect, especially in Quebec, where they were very critical of the Roman Catholic church. During World War II, Quebecers banned Jehovah's Witnesses as an organization and imprisoned Witnesses practicing their beliefs. After the war, Quebec Premier Maurice Duplessis did everything in his power to put a stop to this group. In 1945, provincial authorities carried out large scale arrests of young Witness men and women as they broke local by-laws by handing out their magazines. Montreal restaurateur Frank Roncarelli gave legal assurances for each arrest and by November 12, 1946, he had posted about 380 sureties. Later that month, Premier Duplessis ordered the head of the Quebec Liquor Commission, Edouard Archambault, to revoke the liquor license at Roncarelli's restaurant Quaff—one that Roncarelli and his father had held for 34 years.

Without a liquor license, Roncarelli lost his business, which prompted him to personally sue the premier. He not only won more than \$8,000 in damages, but on January 27, 1959 the Supreme Court of Canada upheld that decision and upped the award by \$25,000. Some judges used harsh words, one accusing Duplessis of "gross abuse of legal power." With legal expenses, the premier was ordered to pay \$46,132 personally. Roncarelli moved to the United States to work for a highway construction company. He died on September 26, 1981 in Groton, Connecticut.

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