

The London Free Press

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Store open Sunday giving books away

Emery may face charge

By Dahlia Reich
of The Free Press

London book store owner Marc Emery chose a unique way of proving a point Sunday — but it may have backfired.

He toyed with the provincial Retail Business Holidays Act by opening his doors but attempted to stay within the limits of the law by giving the books away free.

His generosity may have cost him more than expected. Police say they are considering charges.

Two other London businesses, meanwhile, were charged for opening Sunday despite the Supreme Court of Canada ruling that the Ontario law is constitutionally valid.

Emery, owner of City Lights Book Shop at 356 Richmond St., allowed his Sunday customers of the second-hand book store to take up to two books, worth a total of up to \$5,

■ Saturday brisk, not hectic C1

free. Children accompanied by an adult were allowed up to \$2.50 worth of books. Most books in the store cost less than \$5.

"I'm willing to go to jail for last week's charge, there's no doubt about that," said Emery, who is also action director for the Ontario Freedom Party. He said he could not afford being charged a second time but because he promised the public the store would be open, he decided to give away his merchandise, "violating the spirit of the law but not the letter of the law."

The store owner was charged Dec. 14 for defying the act and vowed to go to jail when the Supreme Court of Canada ruled four days later the act is constitutionally valid.

In a notice posted outside the store, Emery said "City Lights would have to declare bankruptcy if we were hit with a \$10,000 fine... The law stinks but yes, after being reminded that my family and employees need to live, I'm obeying it."

Police visited the store about 2 p.m. and Emery said he was warned he may be charged for allowing customers to browse. Constable Gary Strang said Emery may be charged for violating "areas of the act" but wouldn't comment on which aspect of the law may have been broken. Emery will hear today if charges will be laid.

More than 200 customers took advantage of the freebies at City Lights and Emery estimates, he gave away about \$1,000 worth of books.

Average weekly sales at the store is about \$1,500, "which means we're giving away four to five days of sales," Emery said.

He said he opened Sunday to prove a point and hadn't any intention of breaking the law. He said he won't be open next Sunday.

Elsewhere in the city, police laid charges against two stores and their managers for being open for business but Strang said that, for the most part, there was "overwhelming compliance" with the act in London.

He said most businesses charged with defying the law in the past, some several times, kept their doors locked.

Charges were laid against Her-

● See Page A2, Col. 1



MARK EMERY
--- defies "spirit of law"