

MINUTES OF EVIDENCE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
COMMITTEE ROOM No. 30,
FRIDAY, February 8, 1907.

The Special Committee to whom was referred Bill No. 2, an Act respecting Industrial and Co-operative Societies, met at 10.30 a.m., Mr. Lemieux in the Chair.

Mr. MONK.—Whatever may be the fate of this Bill, I think the information we are going to gather will be valuable not only to ourselves but to the House and to the public generally. I therefore move that we report to the House that the evidence taken from day to day be printed day by day for the use of the Committee.

The CHAIRMAN.—Was that not understood ?

Mr. MONK.—There is no record. We simply obtained authority to employ a stenographer.

The CHAIRMAN.—It is moved by Mr. Monk that a report be made to the House that the evidence taken day by day be printed day by day for the use of the Committee. Is it the pleasure of the Committee to adopt this motion ?

Carried.

Mr. ALPHONSE DESJARDINS, president and manager of 'La Caisse Populaire de Lévis,' was called and examined.

By Mr. Monk :

Q. Mr. Desjardins, do you prefer to give your evidence in English ?—A. Yes, I shall do my best.

Q. Mr. Desjardins, have you had any occasion to study co-operative societies as they exist in Europe?—A. Yes, sir, I have been studying that question for the last ten or twelve years. I have devoted much of my time and attention to it, and, moreover, I have had the advantage for the last ten years of having an interchange of correspondence with almost all the leaders of that movement in Europe, in Italy, Germany, Austria, France, Belgium and England. I have thereby gathered a large stock of information which is not even to be had in the books published up to date. Those details are more of a particular nature of the movement in each country, but still at the same time give a fair idea of the possibilities of that movement.

Q. Would you state to the Committee briefly the advantages which have resulted from the adoption of the co-operative system in some of those countries, in Germany, Italy, France, England and Belgium, and perhaps, also, what kind of co-operative associations exist at the present time particularly in those different countries?—A. Well, as far as the first part of your question is concerned I can only give a very general outline of the advantages derived from co-operation. One of them is an essential feature of it. The poor people are thereby brought up to an astonishing level of education so far as economics are concerned. They know what is the nature of capital. They know its relation to the rest of the social life and thereby a good deal of prejudice is abated. Now when you go down into the details of it, one of the great advantages of co-operation is that it teaches people how to do their own business instead of relying upon a middleman. If you go further into the details and take, for instance, the banking aspect of the movement you will find that it has taught people