

although his voting power should be restricted to one vote, could, at a special moment, or under critical circumstances, deeply influence the working of the society by threatening to withdraw his capital. This condition should never be allowed to exist, hence the necessity of fixing from time to time the maximum amount that can be held in shares or even deposits, as well as the obligation of keeping a large fund of idle money to meet such threats. These precautions are necessary, for black sheep may always make their way into a society, however stringent may be the rules to prevent their entrance.

This brings us to the question of capital. It has been said at the outset that this sort of society is of a special nature, called in the French law, "a capital et personnel variables," that is to say, the capital of which may be increased or diminished by the subscription and payment of new shares, or the withdrawal of paid up shares. The membership of this kind of society may also be increased or diminished by the admission of new members and the withdrawal of old ones. This feature is a necessity on account of the special conditions under which these associations have to work. They appeal almost exclusively to the laboring classes, to those people who more than any other cannot afford to lock up their savings, however small they may be, in non-withdrawable shares. The same rule that applies to the funds deposited in the savings banks must also be applied here. The co-operative people's bank must therefore offer in this respect the same facility as the ordinary savings banks, in order to attract the necessary funds. Moreover, the membership must be variable. Being an association of per-

sons, you cannot expect that the individual will not keep his freedom to move away or give up his membership.

The funds are provided by the issuing of shares unlimited in their number. Their value is determined by the general meeting and must be of a small amount in order that the poorest may have access to the membership. In Belgium, this amount is frequently as low as 2 francs—40 cents—and even one franc. In Canada, we have adopted the five dollars shares, with the exception of one society out of the twenty-two in existence, that has chosen a one dollar share. It is far better that the law should not prescribe the amount in order to give more scope to the societies in fixing the value of the shares, for the circumstances of the various localities and environments may and do often differ so widely as to justify a great variety of amounts so chosen. In Italy, France, Germany and Belgium as well as in England, the law is very liberal in this respect and gives the greatest possible freedom in not stating any amount for these shares.

How are those shares payable? By weekly, semi-monthly or monthly instalments, as the shareholders, as a body, may decide to be the most convenient to themselves. In Canada, our five dollars shares are payable by the trifling instalments of ten cents a week per share subscribed. Fifty weeks or almost a year is therefore granted for the payment of a share. These payments are a splendid training in thrift, and pave the way to a higher conception of economic affairs.

The number of shares that any member can hold is annually fixed by the general meeting of the society,