

APPENDIX No. 3

MR. E. M. TROWERN, Toronto, attended and was examined.

By Mr. Monk:

Q. Mr. Trowern had perhaps better explain what the objection is to this bill?
—A. Yes. Well, Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen, I am Dominion Secretary to the Retail Merchants' Association of Canada.

By the Chairman:

Q. How many members are there in your Association?—A. Over 10,500. I have been properly delegated, along with the Dominion Treasurer, Mr. Beaudry, Montreal, to appear before you, and submit what information we have regarding this co-operative bill. The matter has received the attention of our Association, and a resolution was passed which I will read to you:

“That whereas a bill has been introduced at Ottawa by the Hon. Mr. Monk asking the government to endorse co-operative societies, and to give them special privileges to the detriment of the retail trade, that this Association do all in their power to defeat this measure.”

By the Chairman:

Q. By whom was that resolution adopted?—A. By the Dominion Board.

Q. Will you state briefly on what grounds that resolution was passed?—A. Well, as soon as the bill came up, Mr. Chairman, we submitted the pith of the bill to our various branches, getting their opinion on it, and then we called our Board together and laid the matter before them, and after it had been properly considered they passed that resolution.

Q. Yes, but will you state to the Committee what are the grounds of objection?—A. Certainly. Now, it is somewhat long, and, Mr. Chairman, if you will allow me to put my case in my own way probably we will come at the matter a little more rapidly. In the first place this legislation is asked, in our opinion, to supplement the Joint Stock Companies Act, or to give those people who are desirous of conducting business in this way an advantage that they could not follow out under the Joint Stock Companies Act. We take exception to the name. You call it, ‘An Act respecting Industrial and Co-operative Societies,’ and then your preamble says:—

‘Whereas it is desirable to provide for the creation and organization of industrial and co-operative societies among the farming and labouring classes of Canada;’

Now, the bill does not in our opinion attempt to form co-operative societies among the farmers and labouring people and does not provide for carrying out the co-operative idea amongst those classes. For instance, the bill does not ask the farmers to all join their farms together, to work together, to pool their money together and divide the profits. The bill does not ask the labouring people to get together and work for somebody, to pool all their profits or labour and divide it at the end of the year. It aims at giving the farmers and labouring people of the country an opportunity of combining together, getting anyone's capital that they may like to get, and, by combining, to destroy the retail and wholesale merchants of this country. That is our objection to the Bill. In the first place, it is a bill which is framed—

By Mr. Smith (Nanaimo):

Q. Just to understand your position, I want to ask you what privilege does the Bill give to these people more than you have? For instance, the privilege that you business people have. What special privileges does it give these communities, or what special rights more than you have?—A. Well, we are not asking for the Bill.