MINUTES OF EVIDENCE

HOUSE OF COMMONS,
WEDNESDAY, January 19, 1910.

The committee met at 11 o'clock, a.m.

The CHAIRMAN (Mr. CONMEE).—Though there is not a quorum present, I suppose there will be some more members in presently, so I think we can proceed in the meantime. I might say, for the information of the members of the committee present, that I happened to meet Mr. Wilson in Toronto and learned that he had been looking into the question of nickel and nickel steel for structural material, and I thought the information he could give would be very useful to the committee, so I sought to get him to come down. I didn't have a chance to consult the committee. I, however, saw the minister (Hon. Mr. Templeman), and explained to him that I thought I could get Mr. Wilson, and if I could not get him this week, I could not get him at all, as he was going to cross the ocean again, and the minister thought I might take the responsibility of inviting him, hoping the committee would approve of the action. Mr. Wilson is here, and if the members of the committee would like to hear him I would ask him to come forward.

On motion it was decided that Mr. Wilson be heard.

Mr. ARTHUR WILSON.—I understood from Mr. Conmee that you wanted me to give you some sort of a survey of the nickel industry in this country. In the study of the nickel industry there are only two localities that need to be taken into consideration, namely, the island of New Caledonia, in the Southern Pacific, and the Sudbury district. That is, these two produce practically the whole of the world's supply.

The CHAIRMAN.—Might I just ask a question or two. I understood that you have been examining nickel deposits not only in America, but in different parts of Europe for the British government?

Mr. WILSON.—No, on behalf of British manufacturers—large battle ship and armament manufacturers in Europe, and I have made a special study of the nickel industry for some years. The conditions existing at those localities I mentioned differ so widely that I will give a brief description of the two so that you may realize their respective importance in the world's market. The New Caledonia industry was first worked in 1875, and in recent years has produced 130,000 tons a year as a maximum, and an average of 110,000 tons. It is a silicate of nickel and magnesia occurring as large surface deposits over a considerable area of the island. It varies very much in nickel contents, and owing to the tropical climate, which precludes white men from working, and the absence of fuel and the necessary fluxes, the ore cannot be treated on the island itself, but has to be shipped to Europe for treatment; that is 13,000 miles that they have to ship it in the raw state. The ore averages about 5½ per cent nickel as shipped, so they have to pay freight over that considerable distance on at least 94 per cent of worthless material. The Sudbury ore consists of sulphide of nickel, copper and iron, and averages 3 per cent of nickel, 2½ per cent copper, about 48 per cent iron and 26 per cent sulphur. The production last year, a fair average, was 21,000,000 pounds of nickel; that of New Caledonia was 15,000,000 pounds, that is two-fifths of the world's supply, Sudbury producing the other three-fifths.