

known in Europe. Perhaps a greater obstacle has been lack of knowledge as to the peculiar genius of co-operation. At any rate where the working population of the Dominion has been predominantly British, some notable successes have been achieved. In the Nova Scotia coal fields, for example, there are at present three or four well-founded undertakings, the lesson of past failures through neglect in the establishment of reserves and through extravagant buying having been well learned. There are also successful stores in operation at Guelph, Hamilton and Brantford, Ont. We are all familiar with the record of our co-operative dairying and apple-packing associations, and with Mr. Desjardins' splendid success in co-operative banking at Levis, Que. One result of popular ignorance on the subject is the number of spurious co-operative enterprises which have been launched, especially in Ontario, and which have brought wide discredit on the system. The lack of intelligent and comprehensive legislation is a leading cause of this, and we may regret, in passing, the failure of the bill at the last session of the Dominion parliament which would so fully have supplied this need. I might add that if any one wishes to give serious consideration to the history of co-operation in Canada and to study its failures as well as its successes, the Department of Labour has collected information in detail with regard to every co-operative undertakings in Canada of which it has learned the existence covering several years in the past. The special investigation conducted by the select committee of the House of Commons in 1907 is also full of information on the subject. In connection with that evidence special interest will attach to the testimony of Mr. Mackenzie King as to the theory and practice of co-operation. "I think," said Mr. King, "that a co-operative society started here in Ottawa would be a god-send to the members of the Civil Service." Professor Adam Shortt also gave evi-

dence in sympathy with co-operation, while His Excellency the Governor General, who was also a witness, gave lengthy testimony on the beneficial results of co-operation in Europe.

Let us now come down to the practical and personal problem confronting us—a problem which was bound sooner or later to be suggested by records and statistics like the foregoing to any body of men situated as we are. In considering this, it seems to me that we may roughly and for purposes of discussion divide the subject matter into two main parts representing respectively the wherefore and the why of the problem. In other words we have first to answer the question: shall we or shall we not on general principles make an organized and well-considered attempt to introduce co-operative methods of trading among civil servants at Ottawa? If we answer this question provisionally in the affirmative, we have in the second place to consider: how shall we go about the introduction of these methods so as to insure success? The answer to the latter question will doubtless reflect back upon our first question and in any case the subject in the end must be considered as a whole.

We may begin with respect to the first part of the subject by stating as strongly as possible the arguments which may be brought against any project on the part of civil servants to introduce distributive co-operation. These arguments may be classified in four main groups as follows:

- (1) There may be other more effective means at hand to accomplish the same results.
- (2) The danger inherent in co-operation of doing injury to any other class of the community and the natural reluctance of everyone to cause loss or inconvenience under any circumstances.
- (3) The considerations arising out of the fact that civil servants are employed by the entire community and the bearing of such considerations