

1.—Consumers' Co-operation.

Co-operative Stores.—The first co-operative store in Canada was opened at Stellarton, N.S., in 1861, and, largely owing to the previous experience of the secretary of the society, who remained with it in active service as secretary and manager for 53 years, the association steadily increased its membership to 202 in 1914, when the manager retired. In that year a dividend of 5 p.c. on purchases was paid, but in 1916 the society failed. Ten other stores were opened by co-operative societies in Nova Scotia prior to 1900, but only one of these survived beyond that date. When the Dominion Coal Company was organized in 1893 and closed certain of its mines, these early co-operative ventures failed and their failure is to be attributed largely to this cause.

The society at Sydney Mines, organized in 1863, had considerable success for several years but made the mistake of not providing for a reserve fund. This fact, together with the withdrawal of capital from the society, led to difficulties and when fire destroyed the store in 1905 there was no attempt to rebuild. The history of this organization was sufficiently encouraging, however, to lead to the formation of another society in 1906. The British Canadian Co-operative Society, Ltd., of Sydney Mines, was organized more closely in accordance with co-operative principles, a reserve fund being provided for and business conducted on a cash basis. With a membership of 32 in 1906 and an average share capital of \$16 each, this co-operative society has been "probably the most successful consumers' society on this continent."¹ The society's report for the year ended Aug. 6, 1924, shows a membership of 2,659, capital of \$255,375 and cash sales of \$1,359,800. Dividends on members' purchases are paid at the rate of 12 p.c. and on the purchases of non-members at 6 p.c. Four branch stores are operated at Florence, Cranberry, North Sydney and Glace Bay. There are also co-operative stores at Sydney and Halifax.

Of the existing consumers' co-operative societies in Ontario, the oldest is that in Guelph, which has carried on a successful business since 1904, more than \$100,000 having been returned to members in dividends. The Guelph society was formed for the purpose of running a bakery, but in 1906 a grocery and meat business was added, in 1907 a boot and shoe department, in 1908 a coal yard, while in 1925 a cash-and-carry groceteria was installed to meet competition from chain stores. In the early years of the United Farmers of Ontario, 47 stores were opened on the multiple or chain-store plan, but were not a success and were gradually closed or turned over to local co-operative societies. The high cost of living of the later war period led to the formation of numerous co-operative stores, but the business difficulties of the subsequent years brought failure to most of them.

The miners of British Columbia have organized co-operative stores, in some cases with considerable success. The co-operative association at Natal, B.C., paid a 5 p.c. dividend in 1924 on a turnover of \$126,000, in spite of the fact that the miners were on strike for several months. The miners at Fernie have organized a store and at Revelstoke a store is operated by a society composed chiefly of railroad workers.

In Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta the members of societies conducting co-operative stores are usually farmers, and to the stock of general merchandise are added binder twine and other farm supplies.

¹ Keen, George: *The Co-operative Movement in Canada*. The Co-operative Official, Manchester, Feb., 1924.