

By Mr. McGregor :

Q. Is their barrel a larger barrel than ours ?

A. No it is smaller and it is a straight barrel with very little bilge, but our reports indicate that this year the Nova Scotia apples have been infinitely better carried and graded than the western apples. You take a barrel with a bilge to it and lay it on its side and put two or three other barrels on top of it, and the pressure of the weight of the other barrels elongates it so that there is a space at each end and perhaps that is the reason for the fruit becoming damaged. But the difficulties in the way of Government inspection seem to me to be insurmountable and I would rather try and bring the effects of the present system before the people, and get them to realize how great profits can be realized by the men who really do succeed in properly packing their fruit to meet the requirements of the English markets. It has been suggested that we will have to have the business done in this country in a different way; that the apples should be shipped by large packers, who would buy them in the orchards and take them in and pack them, and I have no doubt whatever that if a system of that kind were established it would have been in the end better for all concerned, but in this country we have amongst the farmers a very strong prejudice against the middleman and these buyers and packers would be laid open to the charge of making too much profit out of it, and a large number of the farmers would not consent to sell their apples in that way. I think myself that the business in other trades is trending in that direction. Take for example we have the bacon and pork trade established in this country on that basis. It has been done by large packing houses who by doing their business in a careful systematic manner have succeeded in establishing the reputation of our bacon and hams in the European markets, and it is doubtful whether that reputation could have been established in any other way. So with our butter and cheese trade. It was only when butter and cheese were made in the factories in a large way that the reputation of these products was established abroad. I am inclined to think that anything almost that we export will have to be handled in a large way so that the reputation for the excellence and uniformity of our exports may be maintained and established and probably the apple trade would be benefited by such an agreement. But in the meantime there is no such arrangement perfected.

In the Annapolis Valley probably two or three men handle two-thirds of the whole crop. They buy the apples in the orchard, sort, grade and pack them and they have been doing the best of this trade, and it is largely due to their care in handling and packing them that the Nova Scotia apples have done so well, and have brought them so much profit in the European market. I have a letter here from Messrs. Watson & Phillip, which Mr. Murray, our immigration agent in Glasgow, has forwarded to me and I will read it for the information of the committee as it is strongly in confirmation of what has been said by Prof. Robertson and Mr. Grindley upon the question of packing. The letter which Mr. Murray incloses is from one of the largest firms of importers in Dundee, and it is as follows:—

"We regret to say we have found grave cause for complaint in regard to the quality of the shipment of Canadian apples. The fault consists of dishonest packing the apples at the top and at the bottom of the barrel being far better than the bulk of the fruit within the cask. This has been very noticeable this year, more so than ever before in our experience and so grave as to cause almost a deliberate swindle."

He goes on then to suggest Government inspection and stamping, but he points out the difficulties to which I have alluded.

"Of course this will entail the examination of each parcel of fruit and one barrel probably out of 50 would require to be opened and turned out and on such examined barrels there would be a reduction in value no doubt but in the interests of honest packers in America who are prevented from getting the proper value of the goods owing to the general depreciation caused by this dishonest method as well as in the interests of receivers here, there is claimant need for such supervision and official stamping. Second quality of fruit of course would bear secondary brand and third quality the brand indicating that the barrels consisted of this grade.

Robert