

Needed Improvements in Marketing Methods

DEFFECTS in prevailing methods of marketing fruit were freely discussed at the Dominion Fruit Conference, held at Grimsby, Ontario, September 2nd to 4th. The discussion was opened by Mr. Robert Thompson, manager of the St. Catharines Cold Storage and Forwarding Company who said that what is needed is assistance which will help growers to obtain remunerative prices for their fruit while enabling the consuming public to obtain their supplies at reasonable figures. At present consumers in thousands of cases have to pay exorbitant prices.

"This condition," said Mr. Thompson, "prevailed this year in connection with the marketing of the cherry crop of the Niagara district. In many places the fruit remained unpicked because of congestion and low prices in our local markets, while in places not many miles distant cherries were selling for 75 cts. to \$1 a basket. The same conditions arise from season to season in other varieties of fruit, such as plums, peaches, and berries.

"We have for markets our own prairie provinces, where little or no fruit is grown, our own cities and towns and sections not producing fruit in every province of the Dominion. The Dominion Government should appoint commissioners, say, one for the prairie provinces, one for British and European markets, and one for, say, such markets as Australia and South Africa or South America. The duties of these men would be to keep in close touch with crop conditions in every competing country and to keep the growers and shippers and the consuming public posted as to actual facts. The Department could find ways to have these facts placed before those interested, possibly by telegrams, and by giving the information to the daily press.

The Government should also set aside a sum of, say, \$4,000 or \$5,000 for the purpose of making trial shipments of fruit. These shipments could be sent to new points and markets and of lines of fruits not heretofore shipped. One condition might be that the grower would only be guaranteed the cost of packages, packing and labor of picking. If some safeguard was placed on these shipments no very great inroads might be made on this fund. Fruit being perishable and growers busy at the time of ripening, they are unable to give the attention to following up the shipments that is necessary when looking for new markets."

A lively discussion took place over Mr. Thompson's suggestions. Some of the delegates contended that the cherry growers in the Niagara district had themselves to blame if they left their cherries unpicked while there were good

markets to be found for them within one hundred miles. Mr. Thompson replied that growers often did not realize in time that there is going to be a need to find such markets.

For years peach growers, having found that the San Jose Scale would not attack sour cherries, have been planting these cherries. This year there was an unexpected glut in the Niagara district, although one hundred miles or so away cherries were selling at high prices. "It is not that we are producing too much fruit," said Mr. Thompson, "but that our methods of distribution are defective and inadequate."

Senator E. D. Smith, of Winona, said that as a result of thirty-five years' experience exploiting the Canadian markets he felt that while there might be chances to exploit some of the foreign markets he believed that the local markets were fully worked. Every week every local dealer receives circulars setting forth the price of fruit. One of his agents in western Canada had reported to him that only the day before he had met the agents of eight different cooperative associations trying to sell their output to any dealer able to buy. Some local dealers sometimes charge the consumers an unduly high price, but the growers could not prevent that, as it is impossible for them to deal direct with the consumer.

Mr. R. Brodie, of Montreal, said that sour cherries this season had sold in Montreal for as high as \$1.25 a basket wholesale.

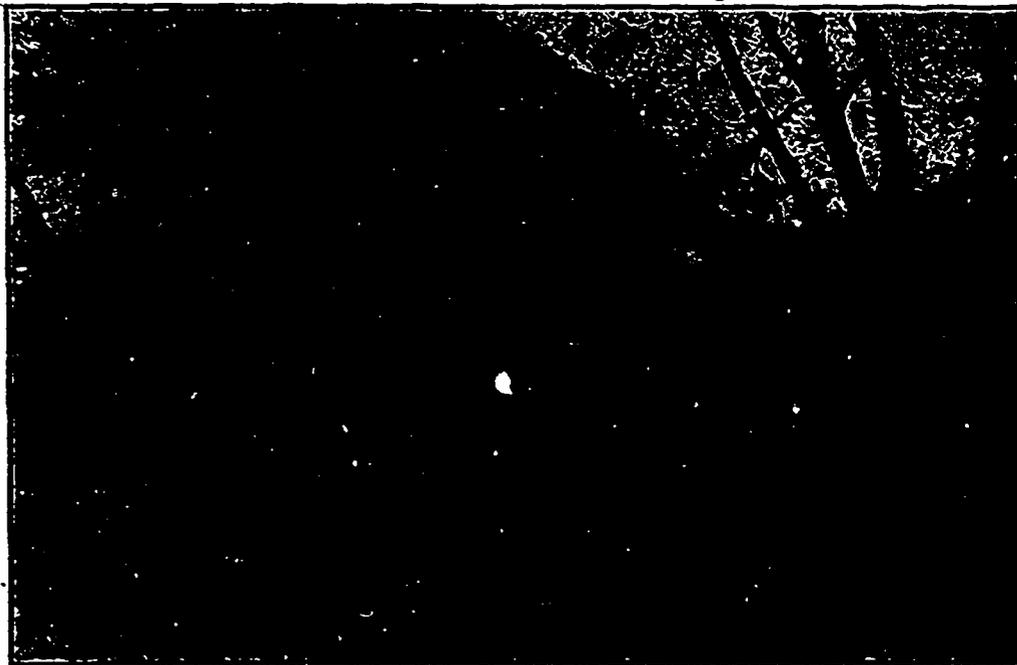
Mr. Pritchard, of Paris, said that he

had been a retailer and now was a grower. Sometimes dealers make undue profits on one consignment, only to lose on another. When there is an unduly large crop growers must expect to receive low prices.

Mr. Thompson replied that he would agree with that statement when the system of distribution was as good as it should be, but not otherwise. There had not been an overproduction of cherries this year, as while there was a heavy crop in the Niagara district the crop east of Toronto was a failure. The total crop of cherries was not sufficient to make a pint for each adult in the province, to say nothing of the children. Under such conditions there was no reason why thousands of baskets of cherries should remain unpicked in the Niagara district, while people were going without cherries not one hundred miles away because of the high prices there charged.

"Growers," continued Mr. Thompson, "often do not want to tell the truth about the size of their crops for fear of depressing prices. In his association he had known the growers in the morning to stoutly deny that there was an overproduction of tomatoes, and that very afternoon they shipped out carloads of tomatoes. The growers had been hoping that there was not an overproduction, and when they denied that there was an overproduction they were simply saying what they hoped was true."

Senator Smith suggested that if the Government fruit inspectors would take a run through the country every now and then they might be able to give valuable reports.



A Productive Apple Orchard in Peel County, Ont., owned by C. Patchett, Cookville, Ont. This orchard contains some 400 trees, mostly winter varieties, such as Spys, Greenings, Baldwins and Kings.