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Co-Operation

What It Means to the Grower of the Fraser Valley

By E. OSBORNE

Much interest has been aroused this year in co-operative marketing of Raspberries in the Mission and Hatzic districts, and although all the returns are not yet to hand, I am able to give a rough outline of the business this season from data already available.

The Fruit Growers held a general meeting July 23rd at Mission City, and at this gathering an excellent opportunity was afforded the growers to hear all about the shipments of the present season, the conditions in which they arrived, the prices realized, and the market situations prevailing on the Prairie. The growers had the advantage of the presence of Mr. W. T. Knight, one of Mission's most up-to-date growers, who visited the Prairie markets in the interest of the Fraser Valley growers.

This company, which is the successor of the Fraser Valley Fruit Union, is now incorporated with the capital of \$25,000 divided into shares of \$10.00 each. Most of the foremost up-to-date fruit growers are shareholders, their aim being to get spot cash on all transactions or F.O.B. prices.

The Union benefited by the fact that Mr. Knight was able to give them information of the conditions of the Prairie and the outside shippers, also valuable data on the markets, which enabled the returns to the grower to be verified. The experience of the growers present at the meeting tends to confirm the opinion of those making the closest study of the situation, namely that co-operation will care for most of the difficulties which confront the grower. Under the present system, the grower knows just what he will get, or nearly so, and he is able to pay out more promptly than under previous arrangements.

As an illustration of the folly of independent shipping when carlots are going to the same town, the following will explain itself. The second car of Raspberries from Mission was sold for \$3.00 per crate, f.o.b. Edmonton. The brokers sold it to the trade for

\$3.50 per crate. The berries arrived in good condition, and everything seemed favorable for a quick clean-up, and good returns. Scarcely had the men commenced to unload the car than a big quantity of crates came in by local express, largely from the same district from which the carload originated that came on consignment. To add to the difficulty some of the berries were being quoted at \$2.00 shipping point, which means \$2.50 laid down Edmonton. One retailer who had ordered crates out of the carload refused to accept on the ground that he could obtain the same berries at \$1.00 per crate less.

This policy on the part of the shippers in selling to the retailers, and sending on consignment, lost to the consignee some \$600.00 on this car alone. Some of the crates actually sold for as low as \$1.00 per crate.

When any co-operative body of growers have carlots to offer, these men will give a price which can never be obtained by small consignments, but it cannot be expected of these men to pay a stated price unless they are assured of certain control of the products they are about to handle.

The Fraser Valley growers have not confined their products to Raspberries. In the spring they made a contract for twenty cars of Rhubarb at 77½¢ per box f.o.b. shipping point. They filled eighteen of these carlots, besides sending a large quantity to other points. They have handled other products, but up to the present time they have not been able to ship the Strawberry in carlots, but hope to do so next year. They have just shipped eleven cars of Raspberries, for which they received \$15,000.00.

The Puyallup Growers have up to date this season shipped three hundred and sixty-five cars of Raspberries, and Bellingham district fifteen cars. The price at shipping point \$1.35 per crate with 7½ per cent commission out of that, so it will be readily seen that our growers are getting good prices.

The success of the organization is due to the efforts of some of the largest and best growers—men who make a study of their business, and who by their honest pack of fruit can be depended upon. Nor should mention be neglected of the small grower who, like the widow with her mite, puts all he grows into the carlots.

All the berries are inspected that go into the cars, but it is to the credit of the growers that very rarely are any refused. The co-operation of the C. P. R. and the good support of its many representatives largely contributed to bring about good results this year.

The fertile Fraser Valley possesses land that if cultivated could supply the great northwest, which is occupied by a people that want to buy our product, but this market can only be successfully cultivated by up-to-date methods of selling. Co-operation is the secret of the success of the growers of this valley. Growth of this movement means more comfort in the homes, and better education to the children. Nearby towns and transportation companies profit by our increased earnings. In fact with our farms better worked and a market assured the whole province will benefit.

To obtain this we must have the co-operation of all the growers, and help from the government and from the Dominion Express Co. as at present we are compelled to pay on each car \$400.00 whether we have one crate or one thousand in a car, but we cannot put the 20,000 pounds in the cars at present. Nevertheless the express company compel us to pay for the minimum, 20,000 pounds.

As an example of the returns from this year's shipments, I append herewith two sample cars, with the results from the marketing of each.

Sample Return to Mission Raspberry Growers.

Highest car 280,660 pounds.
Shipped to Edmonton, arrived in fine condition.