

*The Budget—Mr. Stirling*

for Canada, the government has not seen fit as yet to do it. We know that the Canadian Fruit Trade Commissioner has not been in this country for two or three years and he is not right up to date in the latest progress which the fruit industry has made, especially the boxed fruit industry of western Canada; I know that he feels himself that he would very much like the assistance of an unofficial adviser or two, men who are right up to date in recent fruit history, with whom he could consult in order to form his opinions and place them before the committee.

The most prominent difficulty the fruit grower faces is that of marketing his products, and it is very interesting in this connection to take up the interim report of the commissioner appointed by the government to investigate the alleged combine in the distribution of fruit and vegetables. There are one or two other short extracts that I should like to read in this regard. The question for investigation was—

Whether by reason of the operations of any combine of middlemen the interests of the public, whether producer, consumer or others, are prejudicially affected.

That was the object of the investigation. Let me read further:

Of all classes of the population the producer, whether growing wheat, or eking out an existence in raising fruit and vegetables, or otherwise striving to wrest a living from the soil has had a bitter struggle. But among all producers it is doubtful whether any class has had a more grim and discouraging battle for existence than those engaged in fruit farming. Dependent on weather and season, toiling himself with wife and family early and late, compelled at times to employ additional help, obliged to purchase containers for a perishable product, dependent on agents to dispose of his product usually for an unnamed consideration on distant markets, and faced in a northern climate with American competition before his season arrives, the Canadian fruit grower has had to struggle desperately for a bare living. The wonder is that he survived.

I am not aware that the Commissioner who was appointed by the government for this investigation was a fruit man. It is therefore the more interesting to note the view which he took after his investigation of the difficulty facing the fruit growers. A page or two further on there is another short extract:

The producers of British Columbia may be classified as organized and unorganized; and are known as co-operatives and independents. The co-operative associations, which represent an achievement in organization, have made possible what slight amelioration there has been in the condition of the growers. The independents are enabled in some cases to avoid certain of the overhead to which the co-operatives are subject, but in so doing, they take the benefits created by their fellow growers without contributing to the cost; and in many cases by their unregulated marketing seriously disorganize the market for both parties. Like some

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fungus they sap the strength of the tree which shelters them.

Another most interesting comment by this independent commissioner is the following:

The British Columbia producers' goods come into the market after the various crops of the different southern producers have successively appeared. By that time the "cream" has been taken off the market, and consequently the British Columbia producer needs all the assistance he can get. His market moreover is what has been called a "pocket" market. It is limited to the three western provinces, for he is not in the position of being able to dispose of his goods north and south as can the producer on the American Pacific slope.

That view rather comes into conflict with the view I have heard more than once expressed by hon. members to my left, and something of the sort was mentioned not many days ago by the leader of the larger portion of that party (Mr. Forke). He rather gave it as his opinion, though not in so many words, that if British Columbia could not produce fruit and vegetables and market them in competition with the American producer British Columbia had better quit. I am glad to notice that that expression of opinion, and other expressions of opinion that I have heard as I have moved about amongst hon. members to my left, are not quite so destructive and caustic as they used to be, and I welcome the drawing together between British Columbia and the interests of the two provinces to the east.

Mr. FORKE: Three provinces.

Mr. STIRLING: Three provinces. There are many matters in which the interests of British Columbia and the interests of these three prairie provinces are closely intermingled, and certainly there is nothing that the fruit grower in British Columbia desires more than prosperity in these three provinces, as well as an increase in population. Supposing, through unfair action on the part of some government, protection were removed or so reduced as to cause the fruit growing industry in British Columbia to die out—what would be the effect on Canada? Certainly there would be a depletion in that district; the taxes already borne on a certain number of shoulders in Canada would after that have to be borne by fewer shoulders; the wholesalers' trade in the interior of British Columbia would diminish considerably. And I can assure you that in the poor trade years we have recently passed through the wholesalers of Calgary and the coast cities have looked upon that trade of the interior as their most valuable asset. What would be the result? Consumers in western Canada would pay more for their apples. There would be no more dumping of American