

CONDITIONS SURROUNDING CANADIAN CANNED GOODS*

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At the suggestion of the Hon. John Dryden and President Creelman, of the Agricultural College, I visited the Old Country last summer and made a study of the standing of Canadian canned goods on the English market. My attention was directed chiefly to comparisons between the different Canadian canned pears, peaches, apricots, raspberries, corn, tomatoes, and similar food stuffs of United States manufacture.

A number of the British wholesale houses did not handle any Canadian canned goods. In other houses, where our canned goods are to be found, the general complaint was that our peaches, pears and apricots are pulpy in appearance. When our cans were opened and compared with those sent from the United States, the difference was very marked. The fruit from the other side of the line retained its perfect form and was certainly more attractive than ours, half of which was in pulp and had more of the appearance of boiled turnips than of fruit.

The general impression among the merchants was that our manufacturers purchased the fruit after it had become too ripe, or else that a very inferior variety of fruit, such as windfalls, etc., was used. Notwithstanding this fact, the flavor of our canned peaches was excellent, in fact much superior to that of the California fruit. The general opinion, however, was that Canadian manufacturers must look more closely after the raw material if we are to have a leading place in this very important industry.

One very fine display of canned raspberries, drawn to my attention, was put up in glass sealers, which were neatly labelled. This particular kind of fruit presented a very attractive appearance, and sold readily at good prices. In speaking of this fruit, Mr. Robinson, of the firm of Hanson, Son & Barter, said: "We cannot get enough of your canned raspberries to supply the demand. We have had to cancel a large number of orders for this brand this season. Our customers say the fruit is excellent. If more of your fruit could be put up in glass, the prices paid would certainly be much higher than they are."

There is a steadily growing demand in England for tomatoes and corn. Some few years ago there was a decided prejudice against canned goods of any kind, the reason being that a few cases of poisoning supposedly resulted from eating such foods. This prejudice is gradually dying out. There is, however, a complaint that our manufacturers are not sustaining their record in the matter of quality.

One defect pointed out was a blackening of the corn at the top of the can. This was probably caused by the soldering iron scorching the corn during the process of sealing the cans. In contrast with the black surface exposed, when a can of Canadian corn was opened, several merchants showed me how the United States manufacturers over come this difficulty. They

place a clean piece of parchment paper over the corn and in this way are able to obviate any blackening of the canned goods.

One dealer told me that he did not so much object to a little of the corn being blackened, but it gave the customers a bad impression of the goods. The customers often mistake this blackening of corn for foreign matter and object to it strongly. A little care in sealing the cans and a small piece of parchment paper placed underneath the lid prevents any such false impression.

There is a limited demand for Canadian canned peas on the English market. This is mainly for the reason that most of our peas are white. Most of the peas sold in England come from France, and are colored by the use of a dilute solution of copper sulphate. The canned pea trade in Great Britain is in an unsatisfactory state because of a law prohibiting the use of copper sulphate in any process of manufacture.

The merchants say that it is absolutely impossible for them to sell canned peas unless they are colored and it is practically impossible for them to obtain sufficient peas to supply the demand of their customers unless they are permitted to sell peas which have been colored by copper sulphate solution. Several merchants have been fined for selling such goods and a number of cases are now before the courts pending the decision as to whether or not a small percentage of copper sulphate may be used in the process of manufacture of this particular article of food. There is an excellent market for canned goods in England, and it is possible for Canadian manufacturers to develop a very profitable business along this line. In order to achieve the highest degree of success we must, however, pay special attention to the following points: Our goods must be put up in the most attractive style; the cans must be neatly made and the labels must be placed properly on the cans (appearance counts for a great deal in England); the goods exported must be of the very best quality if we are to compete successfully with our American neighbors; and the goods should be packed so as to prevent injury to the cans. A final point, which of course is demanded in all lines of business, is that all orders should be promptly filled.

Just a word to the manufacturers regarding the sale of their merchandise: I have already stated that there is a great future in England for Canadian canned goods. Let me repeat the assertion, but let me add that regularity in quality is, however, essential to the establishment of a mark or brand of canned goods. It is self evident that a buyer of a lot of goods cannot open every parcel and, therefore, if a brand is to be established in Great Britain it is essential the buyer's confidence should be obtained, which necessarily takes time. The most economical method of procedure in order to obtain such confidence is for the packer to send along a few sample cases, containing a dozen

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