

come into production about June 10. The dominion and provincial governments are not even opening their pickers hostel at Haney, in the heart of the Fraser valley fruit district, until June 10; yet this order is put into effect as of May 29. In passing I want to say that the selling figures I am giving are not my estimates; I am quoting the figures given by the gentleman whom I understand is in charge of this matter, Mr. E. J. Chambers, the administrator of fresh fruits and vegetables for the wartime prices and trade board. The production figures were prepared by a large berry cooperative.

An hon. MEMBER: Mr. Chambers is from British Columbia.

Mr. CRUICKSHANK: Yes, and he is a very fine man, as are all men who come from British Columbia. In arriving at his figures he refers to the years 1938, 1939, 1940, and 1941. The approximate average for those four years, at the shipping point, was slightly over \$1.60 per crate. I want the farmer members of this house, particularly, to think of that. This gentleman is basing the prices he is setting in the year 1944, with present cost of production, on the prices received by the Japanese farmers in the province of British Columbia. How can anyone expect a white farmer to operate under similar conditions? I do not say that the Japanese received enough; I know they did not, according to the figures given by the board. Again these are not my figures; they are quoted by the wartime prices and trade board. In 1941 the average price of berries per quart in the province of British Columbia was 8.9 cents. Can you imagine that?—8.9 cents for a quart of berries. In 1942 the price was 12 cents; in 1943 it was 33 cents, yet this year we are asked to produce for a maximum of 27 cents, though when we can get it we are paying hoeing labour 50 to 65 cents an hour. Last Saturday right in this city berries were selling at 59 cents a quart or 30 cents a pint.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): They are imported.

Mr. CRUICKSHANK: I do not care where they come from. I am getting a good deal of assistance from the hon. member for York-Sunbury, for which I am grateful. While berries are being imported and sold at this rate, we are not shipping. I wonder if any member of the wartime prices and trade board or any member of this house ever saw them picking strawberries for the first shipments. Why, in a field of strawberries the size of this room you would be extremely

lucky to get two crates of berries. That is no exaggeration; in order to get our berries to that early market they have to be picked here, there and everywhere throughout the field, because only a few are ripe and in condition.

Another thing to be kept in mind is that unfortunately in British Columbia we are not heavily industrialized and do not have the large early market. We ship our berries largely to the prairie provinces, and in order to ship them over the mountains you must pick the berries at a certain stage and under certain weather conditions or they will not stand the trip. Apparently some people have the idea that we just turn the pickers loose with pails, but that is not the way they are picked in British Columbia. The berries must be sorted, graded and packed, and that all costs money. I presume it is the same in other parts of Canada, but I am speaking from my knowledge of British Columbia.

How they arrived at these prices, I do not know, but from their own statement they have used as a basis the average for the four years I mentioned. They also based it, as I understand it—and again there was no statement—on the assumption that they expected twenty per cent of our berries would be shipped by crate. I know, and every farmer member knows—probably there are some others who are not so familiar with the country—that we make our profits on crated berries, shipped to the higher priced market. This year, according to their own figures, the board states we will get an average of \$3 a crate. They are working on the assumption, again according to their own statement, that we begin shipping on May 29—to-day. In eastern British Columbia they do not start until after the seventeenth, and in other parts until the twentieth. I do not blame the board for that, because no man alive can predict when we will ship, or how many we will ship, because the Lord Almighty attends to that. It is a perishable product, as we all know. But they base their price upon \$2.88 as a maximum, and a rate of 12 cents a pint is allowed. There is a maximum amount of 14½ cents a pint. They base their average of \$3, according to their statement, on the assumption that the farmer will ship on May 29. Well, we are not by any means starting to ship at that time. They also base their average of \$3 on the assumption that we are going to ship twenty per cent by crate. The actual facts are that last year the largest strawberry shippers in British Columbia shipped out of one of their freight centres exactly ten per cent in crates and ninety per cent in jam. Yet these