

The Fruit Men Meet the Government

THAT was a most interesting scene which greeted the visitor to the Privy Council Chamber, when on the 23rd ult. Sir Wilfrid Laurier and his cabinet met the large delegation from the Fruit Growers' Convention, which had been appointed to carry the resolution relative to the express companies before the Government. The committee, whose names will be found to the memorial below, was enforced by 20 or 30 other delegates and members of Parliament. All were ushered into the Premier's presence by his secretary, and Hon. Mr. Fisher who was to introduce them to him, being delayed a moment in his office, the introduction was made by the chairman, Rev. Father Burke, of P.E.I., who is well known to Sir Wilfrid, and well acquainted with every member present. Chairs as far as they could be secured having been taken, Father Burke said he was pleased to introduce this important delegation. It had come to make the very moderate demand that express companies be subject to the Railway Commission, so that redress might be had when injustices were inflicted. In his country they had only one company so far, the Canadian Express Company. He hoped for the admission of others in the interest of improved rates. He read the memorial prepared by a sub-committee composed of Messrs. Bunting, Smith and Johnson, and approved by all, and called on gentlemen from the different provinces to express their views.

The memorial was as follows:

To the Rt. Honourable Sir Wilfrid Laurier,
Prime Minister of Canada, and Honourable
members of the Government:

HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN,—We, the Committee appointed by the Conference of Dominion Fruit Growers, assembled at Ottawa, at the request of the Honourable Minister of Agriculture, for the purpose of considering questions of national importance relating to the fruit industry of Canada, desire, under instruction from the Conference, to lay before you a memorial which has for its object the enactment of legislation by your Government that will, we believe, be of great advantage to the fruit growers of the various provinces, as well as to the public at large.

There is a large area of the very best land of the Dominion devoted to the growth and production of fruit; and, inasmuch as fruit is a perishable article, it is of the very greatest importance that it be placed in the hands of the consumer with the utmost possible despatch, and under the very best conditions. In order to do this successfully, the express companies operating over the railroads of Canada are made use of to a very large extent. It has been found that there are many difficulties in the way of making the best use of this service, one of the chief of which is the high rates charged for transporting fruit in this manner. Relief has been sought from time to time from the companies directly, and with very poor success.

Inasmuch as your Government in its wisdom has instituted a Board of Railway Commissioners for the purpose of adjusting matters of difference relating to the question of transportation, and inasmuch as the express companies operating in Canada have not as yet been placed under the control of the Railway Commission, we desire to make an urgent request that such legislation be enacted at this session of Parliament as will result in bringing the express companies under such control, thus providing a speedy and effective means whereby differences arising between these companies and the general public may be adjusted properly.

And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.

A. E. Burke, chairman; Martin Burrell, Wm. H. Bunting, D. Johnson, Ralph S. Eaton, J. E.

Armstrong, M.P.; A. A. McIntyre, M.P.; J. T. Schell, M.P., committee.

Mr. D. Johnson, of Forest, Ont., detailed the disadvantages the fruit interest and other interests labored under, and asked for relief. W. H. Bunting, of St. Catharines, stated that Ontario was united in this demand, and cited cases of very great hardships from overcharge and defective delivery. W. L. Smith, of the *Weekly Sun*, wanted the legislation now, as the case was one of long standing, and the patience of the people was sorely tried. R. S. Eaton spoke for Nova Scotia, where three companies operated, and a through rate was not obtainable, to the detriment of trade generally, and the total undoing of the small fruits trade. Mr. Burrell, of B.C., made a strong plea for the matter of the memorial, showing how the railways and express companies were banded together, and the necessity of a court of appeal in the case of the latter thus made all the more urgent.

In reply Sir Wilfrid said that he was delighted to meet this important delegation. He did not know why the express companies were not subjected to the Railway Commission in the original bill. There must have been some reason. However, the delegation had made out a good case and had his sympathy. He would not like to promise legislation, however, at this session; he wanted it to be short. The memorial would not be forgotten, and in one thing at least he would assure immediate action; he would notify the companies of the complaint and represent to them the cases of over-exaction cited. More than this it was not necessary to say, except that he was in thorough sympathy with the delegation, and hopeful of helping it. Rev. Father Burke then thanked the premier for receiving them so cordially, and giving them so reassuring a reply. All retired satisfied that good work had been done.

Prince Edward Island Letter

Rev. Father A. E. Burke

NOW that we know just where Canadian horticulture is at, after conferring together in the best of feeling at Ottawa, and comparing notes in all the operations for which the name stands, it behooves us to get to work in our respective provinces and keep up with, if we cannot really get ahead of, the procession. We are happy down here by the sea (although nothing boastful shall as much as suggest itself to us) in the reflection that after all, about everything we contended for came our way.

It is really remarkable how uniform the horticultural mind of Canada is after all. Whoever thought of reaching a grade decision without a dissenting voice? Who could imagine a vote in a national council on the barrel package with only two or three nays? The whole thing is rather too Utopian to be classed among the actual. And still this same unanimity will greatly help the work we have in hand.

To tell the truth, we would just as soon have seen the grades made Nos. one, two, and three, No. one being perfect, as now we have "Fancy" but this classification seemed to please better, and we had to stand together. A No. one Canadian apple should be perfect. It will come to that some day. At any rate it is well to have a perfect fruit somehow, so that a purchaser of prime fruit, paying the highest price, at home or abroad, may have what he bargains for or get redress easily.

As I said, we were putting our No. ones up here as perfectly as the fancy grade. The small consignment of Senator Ferguson's apples, mention of which I made the opening day of the convention, is in a line with this statement. I may as well give the document here which W. W. Moore, Chief of the Markets Division, had just put in the owner's hands. It is as follows:

"Yesterday I received a report from Mr. Davis, our inspector at London, on the apples landed by the SS. 'Montezuma' which arrived at London from Halifax on February 16. In the course of his report he makes the following reference to your shipment: 'D. Ferguson, P.E.I., 136 bbls. Ben Davis. This parcel was the best example of honest packing that I have seen. The barrels opened clean, the fruit being free from frost or spot, and the uniformity of putting up the fruit reflects great credit on the packer.' It is not very often that I have the pleasure of reading such a gratifying report on Canadian apples, and I sincerely trust that the returns for this highly creditable shipment will be entirely satisfactory to you."

Before long this will be the rule not the exception, and the Markets Chief will cease to

marvel when a P.E.I. shipment reaches London in such prime condition. By the preaching of the profession at Ottawa, and surely it will practise what it preaches, one may well look for a strict and generous conformity to the grading proposed. Uniform packing of uniform fruit in a uniform package should carry Canada as an apple producer proudly before the world.

We were personally acquainted with many of the delegates to Ottawa, and knew the rest by reputation. It was a great pleasure to work with such a school of patriots, whose singleness of purpose, high ideals, and splendid charity could be but a reflex of the refining influence of the great science they so loyally espouse. Many national gatherings we have attended; this was the "most lovable—the most practical."

CROP PROSPECTS

In this province the fruit trees have suffered no injury that I know of in the past winter. The damage of a previous snow blockade may be more perceptible than after the banks disappeared in 1905, but for the most part there is little injury from this source, where any attempt at repair was made.

The surprisingly balmy atmosphere of Feb. has not resulted in any injury to the blossom buds, as was anticipated. Even the cherry buds look undamaged. Mice have not got in any of their work either. Greater care is now taken, and anyway, there appears little trace of them in the still slightly snow-covered corners of our orchards.

There appears to be a good show of blossom buds; and as last year was an off crop with us, we may, in the ordinary course of events, expect a full crop this season. Back-killing, as all can understand, is noticeable nowhere after so mild a winter. P.E.I. trees have come through splendidly and should give a good account of themselves.

Fruit Trade in Montreal

E. H. Wartman, D.F.I.

The apple is the favorite fruit, but the man of small means in this city can take only a passing glance at some of our varieties. Spy is the leader at 70 cts. a peck, or 40 cts. a doz. However, there is a cheaper class with the taste of apples that can be bought at a more moderate rate. These satisfy those persons who will not resort to other fruits.

Some in the trade say: "How short-sighted we have been! When we could have bought No. 1 apples at \$2.50, we said no." They have