

The Address—Mr. Herridge

In a telegram sent to Mr. Low Saturday night, A. R. Garrish, president of the B.C.F.G.A., stated the association "takes a most serious view of your charges regarding fruit distribution in the prairie provinces".

Mr. Low, speaking at a Social Credit meeting in Summerland last week, criticized the B.C. fruit marketing set-up.

Mr. Low referred to a fruit industry "gestapo" or "gestapo-like fruit inspectors" who prevent persons from taking fruit from this province into Alberta unless it has been purchased through the proper channels.

In demanding that Mr. Low either substantiate his statements or withdraw them, Mr. Garrish stated in his telegram that "incontrovertible evidence" shows that close to 30,000 packages of fruit were distributed to Peace River, of which 10,000 were peaches, and that approximately 2,000,000 packages were shipped to the prairie provinces, of which 785,000 went to the province of Alberta.

I have been asked by a number of members of the Fruit Growers Association of British Columbia, to which I belong, to bring this matter before the house to correct the false impression created by the hon. member's remarks. I will be generous enough to say that I think the hon. member for Peace River spoke without thoroughly examining the situation, and without a full knowledge of the facts.

I want to say before proceeding further that I speak with some little knowledge of the question, as I have been closely associated with fruit growers associations in British Columbia for some forty odd years. I have played some small part in my own constituency, and in the association—with thousands of other growers—to build up the excellent co-operative fruit association that exists in British Columbia at the present time.

It is because of that that I feel I must correct my hon. friend. In 1900 there were possibly from 600 to 700 boxes of fruit produced in the interior of British Columbia. In 1950 we produced over 8 million boxes of apples. That is a very short number of years to see an industry develop from such a small beginning to such vast proportions. I remember very well its early days. I can say that, on this question, I speak with a certain amount of sentiment. I have lived closely with the problem throughout the years, and I know of the early struggles of the people who developed the fruit industry in British Columbia. I know of the great investment in both wealth and labour that was required to bring that industry to its present stage of development. They have built this great co-operative, one which all fruit organizations of this type in the rest of the world recognize as the leading example of a first-class fruit co-operative marketing organization.

I remember seeing hundreds of settlers coming in, most of them with no experience, and many with very little capital. They came in to clear the land, to provide irrigation, and to prepare the land for fruit growing purposes. In my own case we had a most interesting experience. I remember that my father was confronted with some difficulty in connection with the clearing of small brush from the area. Someone recommended that he get a herd of goats, and said that the goats would eat the small trees, those up to six inches in diameter. So, off he went to buy a herd of goats. He heard there was a herd available somewhere. We were told to tie up the goats in the woods, where we had a clearing, and to leave them there for about two days, after which we could release them. Then they would eat in an ever-widening circle, and in that way the small brush and small trees would disappear, while in addition we would have the milk.

We did all this. My father went about a hundred miles away, purchased a herd of goats, brought them home, and tied them up for two or three days, and then released them. Within two hours they had all disappeared, and they never came back.

I give that as one illustration of the things people did in those early days.

Mr. Gibson: That is where you get all your votes now—their descendants.

Mr. Knowles: Don't let them get your goat.

Mr. Herridge: I would say this, that, judging from the bleating I hear from Comox-Alberni, sometimes I think they went there.

Mr. Brooks: And eventually landed in the house.

Mr. Herridge: There was great expense involved in clearing this land, providing irrigation and planting trees. Then we had the first crops coming in. Those crops were sold in local markets, to mines and lumber camps. However, as soon as we had larger production the local markets were not sufficient, and we had to sell on the prairie. Then, following that, the British market was developed.

As the crop increased further we found that personal marketing of our crops was completely inefficient, and failed to produce satisfactory returns. In fact, the industry almost faced disaster at one time. I remember a neighbour of mine going to Calgary with a carload of fruit. He said he was going to sell his own fruit, and he was going to sell it right to the brokers in Calgary.