

Modern Marketing Problems—How we are Meeting Them

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FRUIT growing in British Columbia has in it many of the elements of a liberal education. One can hardly hope to succeed without a practical mastery of the problems of marketing as well as of culture and packing. Thus the members of our large cooperative organizations, who pay capable men to handle their marketing must constantly be studying changing problems of market demand and competition, if they are to continue to give confident support to the men they employ to sell their fruit. Many kinds of British Columbia fruit do not lend themselves to cooperative sale and for these lines the individual grower must be his own salesman.

Practically ninety per cent. of all British Columbia fruit that is sold goes to consumers at least four hundred miles away. Probably not more than five per cent. of our fruit is marketed within ten miles of the point of production. Ten per cent. of our apples are marketed from six hundred to twelve hundred miles from home. Such conditions require some study of geography and trade routes, to say nothing of the study of human nature at long range. Because of the long distance from markets and the varying climatic and soil conditions, British Columbia fruit growing lends itself to specialization and, on the whole, requires highly perfected organization for its success.

A PRESSING PROBLEM

One of the most pressing of marketing problems is that of increasing production. In 1900, British Columbia had 8,000 acres in fruit; in 1910, this was increased to 33,600 acres, and in 1913 to 38,200 acres. Of the total planting, not twenty-five per cent. is yet in bearing, but the total production increased from the value of \$200,000 in 1903, to \$1,030,000 in 1913. The 1914 fruit crop on the whole will be 20 per cent. to 25 per cent. greater than in 1913, but the total value will also increase, though not quite in proportion.

The values given are not nearly as great as credited to the crop of 1910 by the Dominion census officers, but it represents only the product handled in recognized commercial channels, and the values are on a f.o.b. basis.

This increasing production, in view of the large market for high class fruit, would be more of a pleasure than a problem if it was not for a steadily increasing production in the north-western states of Oregon, Washington, Idaho and Montana. In these four states, which had practically no fresh fruit industry twenty years ago, there are now over 280,000 acres planted in fruit, which have every reasonable prospect of

commercial success, and an almost equal amount of orchard which is not likely to do so well, but will still add materially to the production. The north-western states moved only about 2,000 carloads of fruit in 1912, but in 1913 they had 10,000 carloads of apples alone, and in 1914 they will have about 15,000 carloads of apples, about 4,000 carloads of peaches, pears, plums and prunes, and over 200 carloads each of apricots, strawberries and cherries, and over 300 carloads of raspberries, in all of which lines British Columbia growers must face formidable organized production, capable of shipping straight carloads of fruits into our markets just as our own crops are coming on.

WHAT COMPETITION NECESSITATES

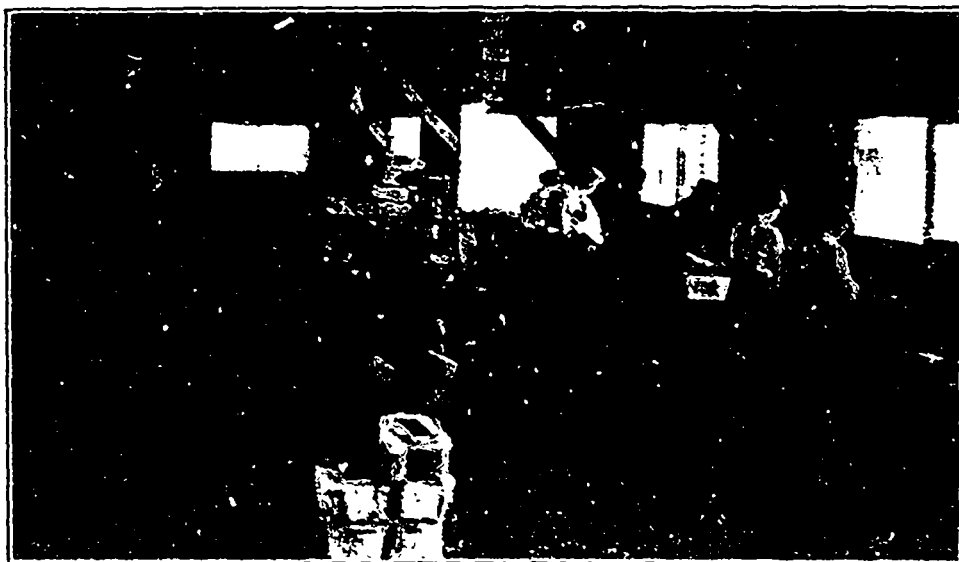
Increasing production and increasing competition will compel our growers, with a new industry on their hands, to be constantly on the alert and to cut cost of production as low as possible consistent with efficiency. Over the whole of the province, cooperative organizations for the purchase of fruit growers' supplies and for the sale of their products have developed. Many of these handle flour and feed, spray materials, and other similar commodities, while in some cases fruit growers are operating highly successful retail businesses in household supplies. Both in the markets of the coast and the prairies, the principal factor in determining our prices and even the entry of our products into these markets, is competition from the north-western states, and the continuous adjustment of British Columbia fruit marketing to meet competition is the most important consideration.

We are being compelled in a multitude of ways to meet American competition.

Most important is the constantly rising standard of perfection in grading, packing, and particularly in the matter of the weight of fruit per package, on all of which our markets are very critical.

The British Columbia packages are, in general, very closely copied after those of the north-western states and California, but changes in their particular styles have to be followed more or less closely by us to meet their competition. Taking a striking and fresh instance: It is generally known that the United States Government has finally passed a law creating two standard boxes for berries, a full pint holding 33.7 cubic inches and a full quart holding 67.4 cubic inches. The Canadian standards are two-fifths of a quart, which is 27.7 cubic inches, and four-fifths of a quart or 55.5 cubic inches. North-western strawberries were shipped into western Canada in dozens of car loads packed in the full pint crate. The consumers made practically no distinction in price between the American full pint and our four-fifth quart, which held one-half more berries. The fact must be said that the consumers took very kindly to the full pints as against our four-fifths. The Dominion Inspection Service do not require it to be marked short in the regulations and in consequence our growers must in 1915 adopt the full pint.

The full pint is also used for American raspberries as against our two-fifths quart, which holds about nine ounces as against ten and a half ounces in the pint. The advantage in this case was on our side, but the trade handling American berries objected strongly to handling our hallack of less capacity, and it is likely if not next year, the following year, we will be compelled to come to the full



Fruit Packing on the Fruit Farm of J. W. Smith, Winona, Ont.