

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

COMMITTEE ROOM No. 105.

THURSDAY, February 13th, 1913.

The Select Standing Committee on Agriculture and Colonization met at 11 a.m., the Chairman, Mr. Sexsmith, presiding.

The CHAIRMAN.—Gentlemen, we have with us this morning Mr. S. B. Chute, of Berwick, N.S., manager of the United Fruit Companies of Nova Scotia. This gentleman is coming from one of the Eastern Provinces. You hear a great deal about the fruit industry of Nova Scotia and no doubt he is in a position to give you some valuable information respecting that most important and valuable industry. I would suggest that it will be more agreeable to the witness and at the same time be more satisfactory to the Committee if you keep to one subject till you have pretty well exhausted it before looking up another branch. It will be better for the witness and the information will be in much better shape for the public. We will now hear what Mr. Chute has to say.

Mr. S. B. CHUTE.—Mr. Chairman and Gentlemen: In the first place I wish to thank you for the courtesy you have extended to me in inviting me to place before you the claims of the Fruit Growers of Nova Scotia, also to state that your consideration in so doing is much appreciated by the 1,500 farmers comprising the membership of the United Fruit Companies of Nova Scotia.

This Company, of which I am general manager, is comprised of twenty-nine Co-operative Companies. Other companies are being organized and it is safe to estimate that in June next there will be in the United Fruit Companies, forty such Co-operative Fruit Companies, representing 75 per cent of the entire apple crop of the Valley. Up to the present time we have this season shipped over 300,000 barrels of apples.

The Fruit Industry of Nova Scotia has made wonderful strides in the last few years, while ten years ago the total exportation of apples did not exceed 600,000 barrels, last season some 1,700,000 barrels were shipped.

As an indication of the steady growth, I quote the following figures:—1880—41,785 barrels; 1890—89,000; 1896—409,000; 1903—600,000; 1908—625,000; 1909—1,000,000; 1910—350,000; 1911—1,700,000.

Huge acreages of orchards have been set out during the last five years and it is safe to predict that in five years' time 3,000,000 barrels of apples will be an average yearly shipment for the famous Annapolis Valley.

You will gather, therefore, that this industry is rapidly becoming one of the most important in Nova Scotia and we who are engaged in its operation and have large sums of money at stake feel that the time has come when the Dominion Government should give us the same measure of protection that is provided for other important industries.

I think this can best be accomplished by the creation of a Department whose special care shall be the interests of fruit industries of the Dominion. At present this industry is in the care of the Dairy and Cold Storage Commissioner but we feel that it is now of sufficient importance to merit the sole attention of a special Department.

The fruit industry is labouring under many difficulties and disadvantages and is seriously handicapped thereby.

We in Nova Scotia feel that we have a decided grievance in the matter of railway transportation.