

The Canadian Horticulturist

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THE TARIFF QUESTION

The hot discussion of the tariff question as it relates to fruit, that has been precipitated by the action of the directors of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association, in agreeing to confer with a committee from the Michigan Horticultural Society on this subject, may result in good. It serves to illustrate how careful the directors of the association must be in dealing with matters of this kind. This, unfortunately, now, is largely a political question concerning which there is a clear-cut difference of opinion among growers all over the country. Any action that the association may take, therefore, on the subject is certain to bring it into open conflict with a large number of growers and to accomplish but little if any good. The outcome, probably, would be that both political parties would endeavor to gain control of the association, and that would be disastrous.

This whole tariff question, when boiled down, resolves itself into this: Were the United States markets to be thrown open to our Canadian growers, it would enable us, at certain seasons, to dispose of much of our fruit to better advantage than is now possible. On the other hand, were our markets thrown open to the United States growers, it would mean that Canadian growers, particularly those who produce peaches and small fruits, would be at the mercy each year of the growers in any section of the United States where there might happen to be a glut.

This would make the position of the Canadian growers very precarious.

While there are advantages in favor of a tariff on fruits, we feel that it is absolute folly for a small number of growers to attempt to have a tariff imposed that would shut southern fruit out of our markets, and particularly our western markets, at seasons of the year when such fruit cannot be produced in sufficient quantities in Canada. The best suggestion we have seen so far is that made by Mr. W. Maclean, M.P., who advocates the establishment of a tariff on fruits and vegetables during only those seasons of the year when they will be of benefit to our growers. This suggestion has much to recommend it. It is reasonable, and a little time spent looking into it more thoroughly than has yet been done would be of advantage.

As regards the directors of the Ontario Fruit Growers' Association, the discussion that has taken place has made it clear that they will need to deal with this subject with the greatest care. They are handling an explosive substance which, if it goes off, may have disastrous results.

THE COLD STORAGE ACT

The cold storage act introduced into the Dominion Parliament by Hon. Sydney Fisher is not drafted in a manner that will tend to encourage the erection of cooperative fruit packing houses by fruit growers and, therefore, is disappointing. It may encourage the construction of such plants by private individuals and thus assist growers indirectly. The benefits likely to be derived, even in this way, however, we fear are not great.

The act provides that only ten per cent. of the cost of the warehouses will be advanced by the government upon their completion. The remaining twenty per cent., to be paid by the government, will be distributed in four annual instalments of five per cent. each. This means that the persons interested in the erection of these warehouses will not receive their final share of the government's assistance until four years after the buildings have been completed.

The object the government has in view, in distributing its assistance in the manner proposed, is commendable, but we fear it will defeat the objects aimed at, at least as far as fruit growers are concerned. What the fruit industry needs is assistance that will offer a strong inducement to growers—who are proverbially slow to move in matters of this kind—to undertake the erection of simple warehouses, provided with ice cold storage for use during only a limited period each year, that will enable them to handle their fruit on the cooperative basis. Unless the assistance thus given upon the completion of the warehouse is equal to at least twenty per cent. of the cost of construction not many growers are likely to take advantage of it. The remaining ten per cent. could be distributed in two instalments of five per cent. each during a period extending over two years. This is a most important matter. Fruit growers will do well to draw it to the attention of their members in the House of Commons.

FUMIGATION METHODS

There is need for a more vigorous enforcement in Ontario of the law respecting the fumigation of nursery stock. The semi-annual inspection by officers of Department of Agriculture is beneficial as far as it goes. It is not enough. Besides the visits of the general inspector, something should be done to ensure fumigation being done when the inspector is not on hand. Many of our leading nurseries can be depended upon to carry out the provisions of the law without government supervision, but there are others who consider the matter one of much trouble and useless—and there are a few nurserymen who boast of their ability to fool the inspectors. To prevent the work being slighted in any

nursery, it would be well for the government to appoint a man at each of them to superintend the work during the shipping seasons. This would incur some expense, but nothing to compare with the advantage gained in lessening the spread of San Jose scale and other injurious orchard pests.

A feature of our fumigation laws that is subject to adverse criticism is compulsory fumigation of stock at the border from states that enforce laws at home. It would seem that something could be done to remedy this matter. It is claimed that, while one fumigation may not injure nursery stock, a second one (as is now required at the border) is oftentimes disastrous. Until this is done, however, the condition of affairs at the border could be mitigated by passing a regulation compelling firms on the other side, who desire to do business in Canada, to pack in a separate package those classes of stock that the law require shall be fumigated. As it is now, nursery stock of all kinds is placed in the same package, thus necessitating considerable labor and time in removing the contents and sorting them. A simpler remedy still, but one not so efficient, would be to compel foreign nurseries to write distinctly on the outside of the package the classes of stock that are contained therein. This would facilitate work that is important when one considers that at Niagara Falls, last spring, there entered Canada 504 consignments, comprising 7 full carloads, besides 632 boxes and bales—to say nothing of the quantities that entered the country at other points.

It has been suggested that dipping nursery trees in a lime-sulphur wash be substituted for fumigation with hydro-cyanic acid gas. This has much to commend it. Experiments should be conducted at the Ontario Agricultural College or elsewhere to determine its worth.

THE HORT'L SOCIETIES' ACT

On the first of this month the new act governing the horticultural societies of Ontario came into effect. Hereafter, the horticultural societies of the province will work on an entirely new basis. The provisions of this act have been referred to before in these columns but further reference at this time may be in order.

Exception, so far as we know, has been taken to only two of the main clauses. In the past some half-dozen societies have devoted most of their funds to the holding of exhibitions of fruit and flowers at the time of their local agricultural exhibitions and in conjunction therewith. Under the new act this will not be permissible, and a few of the societies are complaining on that account. We still hold that this provision of the new act is sound. Agricultural and horticultural societies were established for two radically different purposes. When, therefore, a horticultural society turns over most if not all of its funds to the holding of an exhibition in conjunction with an agricultural society, it becomes, to all intents and purposes, a branch of the agricultural society. A government grant to horticultural societies would never have been made had it been thought that their funds would revert back to agricultural societies that, also, were receiving government aid. The new act, therefore, does well to lay down the principle that horticultural societies, hereafter, must work along the lines for which they were intended.

The second clause to which exception has been taken is the one that stipulates that a society shall not expend more than one-third of its funds in any one line of work. The wisdom of this clause will depend largely upon the manner in which it is enforced by the Department of Agriculture. It may be taken for granted, at the outset, that the Department will not be arbitrary in this matter. Where a society is accomplishing good work, even were its expenditures in one line to exceed the legal limit, the department can be depended on not