

Mr. W. K. ESLING (Kootenay West): Hon. members from the coast have been energetic in presenting to the government the inequalities of these marketing orders in regard to berries, and certainly the member for Kootenay East (Mr. MacKinnon) has made a perfect presentation of the local conditions. The wartime prices and trade board have simply brought in a blanket order covering the four western provinces with absolutely no consideration and no proper knowledge of local conditions.

The conditions at the coast are very different from those in Ontario. The conditions in Kootenay East are considerably different from those in Kootenay West. We do not have the competition of Japanese labour as it previously existed, but we have had such competition and such disregard for labour and wages from the Doukhobors as to have discouraged considerably the growing of strawberries in the interior. Many times, as the member for Kootenay East says, the growers do not get back the return for crates alone, and it is discouraging not only for local marketing but for shipping.

I am sure that after the presentations that have been made by British Columbia members the government will see that some consideration is given to the interior growers so that they may get at least a return which will pay them for their labour and for the material involved in crating.

Mr. DANIEL McIVOR (Fort William): I have a relative who went into the berry business at Chilliwack three years ago and he was glad to get clear of it at a considerable loss for the reason that the cost of labour was high, the price of the berries was low, and there was unequal competition with the Japanese. We were told yesterday some place that if one part of the body suffers, the whole body suffers with it; and if one province suffers the whole of Canada suffers with it.

Mr. B. M. HILL (Charlotte): I do not believe that a price ceiling is necessary in New Brunswick. It is my impression that the market will take care of the price of strawberries. I do not agree with the hon. member for York-Sunbury (Mr. Hanson). I believe the minister knows all about the marketing of strawberries in the maritime provinces.

Mr. HANSON (York-Sunbury): I do not think he knows anything about it.

Mr. HILL: If the minister will cast his mind back he will remember that when the first strawberries came on the market they were carefully picked. They consisted of a few berries that ripened ahead of the others,

and it was quite an expensive operation to pick the berries. They were marketed at a fairly high price, as a luxury. The next week, the berries having become more prolific, the price automatically dropped sometimes eight and ten cents a box. A fortnight later, when the great mass of the berries ripened, the crop automatically took care of the price and the price dropped seven and eight cents a box. That invariably takes place each year in New Brunswick.

This price ceiling does not take care of the marketing of the early berries, the few scattered berries that ripen at the start. If the farmer were to receive twenty-two cents a box right through for his average crop he would certainly be getting a high price; but what will happen is this. The first berries that were marketed at around thirty-five cents a box will have to be sold at twenty-two cents, and then the next week, when previously they dropped to twenty-five cents a box, they will still have to be sold at twenty-two cents. When the large crop comes on the price will automatically drop eight cents and the farmer will get an average of only twelve to fifteen cents a box.

Hon. GROTE STIRLING (Yale): It has not been very often in nearly twenty years when a fruit discussion has taken place in this house that I have not played my part in it. On this occasion I have but little to say, because in the Okanagan valley, which I represent in this house, the fruits grown are more largely the tree fruits than the small fruits; consequently we are not shippers on a commercial scale of large quantities of berries.

The difficulty with which we are faced to-day is that great one of ascertaining what the price should be. It has been the difficulty over the years. It is accentuated at this time when there is more necessity than ever to take care of the consumer. What has been wanted, what has been desired by the producer who is producing over a series of years, is that the right price should be received; that the consumer should not suffer but that the producer should get an adequate return for his work.

As I have not had representations from those whom I represent here with regard to prices, labour, and so on, I am not going to take any more part in the debate except to say that in listening to the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Cruickshank) last week and to-day I must say that I am impressed with the suggestion that in so far as this year is concerned it does not look as if the dates chosen were the right dates for the purpose. I would suggest that consideration be given to the possibility of setting those dates in