

Inasmuch as the motion has been presented at the proper time, and I regard it as a matter of urgent public importance, I consider it in order. If no objection is taken, the hon. member for Fraser Valley has the floor.

And leave having been granted:

Mr. CRUICKSHANK: Mr. Speaker, I asked for the adjournment of the house to discuss a matter of national urgency, namely the immediate threat of wastage of the current crop of small fruits, tree fruits, vegetables, butter and egg production and the fish pack in British Columbia because of the lack of the necessary wood and wood product containers. I do so because I believe the matter is not merely of immediate national urgency, but that it is of international urgency.

The pack is threatened with extensive wastage because of the lack of wood and wood product containers to collect and transport it. This shortage, while brought to a head by the current lumber strike, was very serious long before the strike occurred. Because of the extreme shortage of lumber, few barrels, crates or hallocks have been produced this spring, because the lumbermen found it more profitable to convert their logs into building lumber than into boxes at the current ceiling prices. This situation got so bad that on April 30, Donald Gordon gave the box manufacturers an open permit to manufacture the necessary containers, the British Columbia fruit crop alone requiring 30,000 barrels, 16,000,000 boxes, 200,000 crates and 5,000,000 hallocks. But slight production had followed when the lumber strike closed all box factories.

The first small fruits are now ripening in the fields, and I now quote a wire I have received from the president of the British Columbia branch of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, dated May 20. It states:

Vernon, B.C., May 20, 1946.

G. A. Cruickshank, M.P.,  
Ottawa, Ontario.

Unless manufacture of berry crates, processing barrels, egg cases and vegetable crates is renewed immediately heavy losses to growers, processors, distributors and employees in these departments are inevitable. Harvesting of berries starts in about fortnight and if containers are not ready large part of heavy and valuable berry crop will be left in fields to rot. Not only domestic fresh market supplies affected but export of processed berries for Britain. Eggs for Britain from Fraser Valley affected and also vegetables from Fraser Valley Vancouver Island and interior. Urge your interest and assistance towards settlement ensuring resumption mills and woods operations. Tree fruits crop of record proportions from Kamloops through Okanagan and east to Creston in prospect and every day mills are idle means loss of boxes that cannot be made up during balance of season. Our federation confirms and supports vigorously representations of British

Columbia coast growers association, Pacific coast poultry producers association and British Columbia fruit growers association. Our federation would value message from you regarding this crisis.

P. E. French,

President, B.C. Federation of Agriculture.

In the house for the past two months the greatest emphasis has been laid by all parties on food production, because of shortage in Canada and starvation abroad. In view of the immediate threat of wastage of the tremendous British Columbia crop of perishable foodstuffs, I should be derelict in my duty as a member of parliament if I did not move the adjournment of the house so that public attention may be directed to this grave situation.

My colleagues from British Columbia are equally concerned over the emergency. I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for permitting this motion for adjournment. I shall be as direct and as brief as possible in anything I shall have to say. Perhaps hon. members will excuse me if, for once, I stick closely to my notes, for I wish to present the plight of the food producers and my proposed solution in as clear a manner as possible.

It is often said, sir, that the entire economy of British Columbia is dependent on the lumber industry, and that this is true even of agriculture and fisheries, for the great bulk of our pack in small fruits, tree fruits, vegetables, eggs, butter, and fish, is collected, packed and marketed both at home and abroad in wooden containers, whether they be barrels, crates, or hallocks. In wartime our producers have not only had great difficulty in getting farm labour to cultivate the crops, but, because of shortages in the lumber industry, each year they have found it more and more difficult to obtain the containers in which to pack and ship them.

Normally a great deal of the production is done in the winter time, so that an adequate stock is available at the beginning of the picking season, and during the packing season the box factories produce a maximum output which in the past has barely sufficed to save the crop. This past winter, however, the ceiling price on these containers was so low in comparison with the price for construction lumber that most of the manufacturers chose to turn out lumber instead of boxes. A grave situation developed, and as long ago as March 19, again on April 8, and again on April 24, I wrote to the wartime prices and trade board and the government, pointing out that unless box manufacturers were in full production we would have tremendous waste of food in the summer. I should like to