

*Fruit Wastage—Containers*

to the United States berries which otherwise would go to waste in the province of British Columbia, then I do not think anyone in the government or in this house would take the position that these berries must be allowed to spoil in the fields instead of being shipped to someone, somewhere, who would utilize them and pay the producers for them.

On the other hand I should like to emphasize the fact that a market for SO2 has been represented to us as most important to the berry growers of British Columbia, and I repeat that one of those who have been most ardent in making these representations is the hon. member for Fraser Valley. That is only natural, since as he has stated this afternoon he represents the berry growers. So I would say that anything the department has said or done in regard to the matter has been with the view of protecting the position of the berry growers of British Columbia. As far as we are concerned at the moment the growers will be in a position to make up their own minds as to whether they wish to ship five hundred tons of berries to the United States, leaving it to the future to determine whether supplies can be placed in the other markets to which they usually send berries. We are not going to battle for them or against them in that matter; we think that is something in which they themselves are most interested. We will assist them in every way possible in doing what they desire to do. But I should like to say that in making the distribution of the five hundred tons, or any other quantity that is to be exported from British Columbia to the United States, I do not think anyone will expect us to issue a permit to any one organization. Whatever permits are issued should be distributed over the whole industry in British Columbia; and in making that distribution the interests of the berry growers of the province will be taken into consideration first. One of the factors to be kept in mind in arriving at any conclusion will be the question whether containers are available at the time the matter is under consideration; that is, some consideration has to be given to strawberries immediately, and to raspberries some two weeks hence, though I agree that provision must be made in advance so people may know what they are going to do, and they must know what the situation is going to be. When it becomes necessary to make a decision and when all the facts are known, the question whether or not containers are available will be one of the main considerations in the mind of the department in deciding what part of the product might be

[Mr. Gardiner.]

exported and what part might be marketed in our own country or in Great Britain, in accordance with the wishes of those who are growing the berries. In other words I do not want the house to think there is any controversy with regard to this matter which cannot be settled, better than anywhere else, among the berry growers of British Columbia themselves, as far as the marketing of the berries is concerned.

On the other question, dealing with the strike and the making of boxes in British Columbia, I have nothing to say this afternoon. I have not the information upon which to base any statement; therefore I leave that matter to be discussed by others who have the information at hand. As far as the marketing of these berries is concerned, however, no department of the government is going to do anything which will make it even possible for berries to rot unconsumed in the fields of the province of British Columbia.

Mr. THOMAS REID (New Westminster): Mr. Speaker, the matter brought before the house this afternoon by the hon. member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Cruickshank) is indeed a serious one, in that it affects not only the supply of food, but also the livelihood of considerable numbers of farmers.

May I say first of all a word as to the remarks just concluded by the Minister of Agriculture (Mr. Gardiner). The information he gave in the latter part of his speech is not borne out by the information submitted to us by those who are growing berries and those who are in charge of the canning factories. In the first part of his speech he read from a statement which said that one concern alone were 13,000 barrels short, and that 45,000 crates were needed. Then, in the concluding part of his remarks he pointed out that from the further information he had it would seem as though there were ample barrels and ample crates. To me there is a conflict of view in what he has said.

Mr. GARDINER: I do not wish to be misquoted. If I left that impression, I did not intend to.

Mr. REID: I thought you did.

Mr. GARDINER: We had better straighten it out, then. The statement I made was that there are sufficient barrels with which to ship SO2 to Britain, but I did not say there were sufficient containers of any other kind to market fruit. I did say if there are not sufficient containers for the marketing of this crop