

Strawberries—Prices in British Columbia

possibly been a little better. But the war has changed conditions again. Labour shortages and increased costs have put the producers in a position at least approaching the plight in which they were a few years ago.

With regard to the date line of June 17 I wish to make this point. You can get on the train at Vancouver in what might be classed as summer weather and in twenty-four hours you are in the interior in the fag end of winter; therefore I do not believe it is possible to set a date line that can be fairly applied to all districts in British Columbia. If June 17 is fair for the coast, it is certainly not fair for the interior. On Friday I had a telegram from the Creston district stating that no berries would be ready for shipment on June 17.

In regard to the price, it was objected that \$2.88 for a 24-pint crate is too small. They stated that it was questionable whether at that rate this crop would be picked, and certainly there would not be a crop next year.

I suggest that conditions of season and climate in British Columbia be taken into consideration. If June 17 is a fair date for the lower mainland and Vancouver island it is perfectly all right with me, but a later date should be set for the up-country fruit growers. Whatever date is agreed on for the lower mainland, I suggest that a date at least two weeks later be set for the interior.

Hon. R. B. HANSON (York-Sunbury): No representations have been made to me by the strawberry growers of the Saint John valley, but I know that a very substantial amount of small fruit is grown in the counties of York, Sunbury and Queen's. Our climatic conditions are somewhat different from those in British Columbia. It will be learned with surprise by some members that our season is two or perhaps three weeks later than Ontario, and that our crop comes on at what might be termed the tail end of the season, at a time when the Ontario berries are nearly over and when the appetite of the public for strawberries is more or less satiated. So that our growers have always been under a very definite handicap. Their principal export market is in Montreal, where our early fruit has to meet the competition of the local product.

My suggestion is that, so far as that zone is concerned, there is no need at all of any price ceiling, and I should be glad of an opportunity to meet with Mr. Chambers, whom I do not know personally, and discuss the matter with him. I think the member for Fraser Valley (Mr. Cruickshank) made a substantial point when he suggested that, before these prices are fixed by an arbitrary

[Mr. G. E. L. MacKinnon.]

board under powers delegated to them by the cabinet under the War Measures Act, somebody should come and see the local member and ascertain what his reaction is. He wishes to act fairly with both the producer and the consumer because his constituents are in both categories. I suggest that before an arbitrary rate is fixed something of this kind be done. I do not know anything about the situation in British Columbia, whether the price is fair or not, but courtesy itself seems to me to dictate that the local members in the areas affected might at least be asked their opinion. I am satisfied that with that judicial capacity which the member for Fraser Valley has so often exhibited in this house, he would do justice both to the producers and to the consumers in his constituency, and that is the attitude that I would desire to take myself.

Without having been instructed, but having a substantial knowledge of the conditions obtaining in New Brunswick, which I have endeavoured to outline, I am of the opinion that no price ceiling order is necessary at all for the maritime provinces. I am going to suggest to the minister that if he will be good enough to ask the officials in charge to have a chat with me, we could talk the matter over and I could get their point of view while I would endeavour if possible to give them my viewpoint.

They have definitely in New Brunswick promoted the production and sale of small fruits. We have an overnight market to the city of Montreal. With gasoline restrictions such as they are, the truck distribution is not as good as it used to be. A great deal of this fruit was handled by trucks in days gone by. That is not so important, of course, for export, but it is very important for distribution in other parts of the provinces. There are counties in New Brunswick that do not grow strawberries at all, just as there are counties in that province that do not grow apples. Most of the apple crop in New Brunswick is grown in the three counties to which I have referred, York, Sunbury and Queens, and their best market is the market of the adjacent counties where they do not grow apples. The same is true of strawberries.

I have an open mind on the subject of prices if there is to be fixing of prices, but my immediate reaction is that there is no necessity at all for a price ceiling on strawberries in New Brunswick. I should like to see it abolished and I should be glad if the minister would see that the gentleman in charge of this problem—and of course I suppose it is a problem, more acute in British Columbia than elsewhere—would speak to me about it. We might arrive at certain conclusions, or at least agree to disagree.