

GROWERS' APPROVAL GIVEN AT HAMILTON TO SOMERSET REPORT

Some Adverse Criticism Is
Heard, But Majority
Favor Proposals

TARIFFS ARE DISCUSSED

(Staff Correspondence of The Globe.)

Hamilton, Feb. 25.—By a vote of 126 to 30, delegates to the annual convention of the Fruit Growers' Association of Ontario and the Niagara Peninsula Fruit Growers' Association this evening adopted the Somerset report on the marketing situation in Ontario. Some pointed opposition was offered to the report, but this appeared to represent the minority of the two associations, and the majority felt that the proposed tax of 25 cents an acre on members was a trivial matter when compared with the benefit that would accrue from the carrying out of the recommendations contained in the report.

Delegates also expressed themselves as agreeing that the two most vital recommendations of the fourteen contained in the report by Commissioner W. B. Somerset were the first and second, so far as the growers were concerned.

These are as follows: 1. That a Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Markets Council be established to deal with marketing problems. That this Council have a permanent paid Secretary, and that a local Secretary be appointed for each district. The Council to have an Executive Committee and power to appoint committees to study and deal with the different problems involved. 2. That all commercial fruit and vegetable growers in Ontario be registered and required to place their registered number on all packages they market. That some small registration fee per acre be charged, and all findings, advice and recommendations of this Markets Council be made available to all registered growers. Registration fees to be made available for growers' purposes.

Leave Rest to Council.

The remaining recommendations in the report, it was suggested, had to do with matters the Growers' Markets Council could deal with when such a body comes into being. A number present were in favor of only these two recommendations of the report being adopted at this time, but the majority felt that, in common gratitude to Mr. Somerset and to the Ontario Government, the report should either be adopted as a whole or rejected.

Mr. Somerset went over his report in detail, and analyzed the various phases dealt with. In summing up, he said he felt that the two most pressing needs confronting the fruit and vegetable growers of Ontario were: That they should organize in some way and register their membership; and, secondly, establish a Markets Council. Distribution and marketing were the most difficult problems to overcome if the industry was to be stabilized.

He then briefly recommended the drafting of definite crop programs, increased production for increased market demands, central packing and cold-storage plants, toward which the Government would give financial assistance;

advertising; better relations with canneries and wineries, and solution of the recurrent chaos consequent upon surplus and glutted markets. There really was no reason for a surplus, he said, as the local markets could be increased greatly by systematic marketing. The removal of low-grade products from markets was another recommendation. Collective purchasing of fertilizers, containers and other supplies all would help to reduce the costs of production. The system of blind consignment sales had been condemned by wholesalers, who said it was ruinous to them and the growers alike, as it demoralized the market.

Thinks Tax Inadequate.

The report then was thrown open for discussion. E. R. Bond of Mount Brydges said that from the standpoint of the apple grower he believed the establishment of a Markets Council would prove a good thing, but in order to function properly it would need considerable capital, and he feared that the proposed tax of 25 cents per acre on growers, who were members, would prove quite inadequate. Moreover, he believed that the average grower was bearing just about all he could in the way of taxes. If financial assistance was forthcoming from both the Dominion and the Ontario Governments toward the establishment of a Markets Council, then he believed the project would succeed. Sales offices in Eastern and Western Canada also would be a good thing, but Mr. Bond thought these offices should be staffed by the Ontario Department of Agriculture. He hoped that all sales for outside markets would be on the f.o.b. basis. It also would help improve conditions if the Fruit Branch at Ottawa made it compulsory that all open packages should be graded. He was not keen on the prospect of collective purchase of supplies, as he feared the small basket-maker or barrel-maker would be frozen out and a monopoly created that would result, ultimately, in higher prices for such supplies.

A. M. Cox, Winona, severely criticized the Somerset report and termed it a superficial document that did not deal with the fundamental economic problems with which the average grower was faced. A few others also opposed the report, but it was made clear to them by H. L. Craise, President, that the proposed Markets Council would exist merely to promote sales and find markets. It would not entangle the growers in any way.

No Selfishness.

Colonel William Andrews of Beamsville urged the growers not to argue over the proposed tax of 25 cents an acre, which, he said, was nothing when compared with the benefits the growers would derive. "We must not be selfishly individualistic in this matter," he said, "for we have got to realize that if the other fellow has a surplus, and cannot sell, then his plight has almost as serious an effect upon us as it has upon him. I contend that the unsold surplus, which is always occurring, is our great problem. Personally, I endorse the Somerset report in full."

James E. Johnson of Simcoe said: "We, as fruit growers, cannot afford not to approve this report. The tax of 25 cents an acre is nothing. I move that we get down to business and adopt this report in full without further discussion."

In reporting for the Committee on Legislation, Paul Fisher of Burlington stated that Commissioner McIntosh hoped next year to have a device that would determine by sugar content when fruit was immature. The convention voted down a recommendation that truckers and shippers of fruit and vegetables be bonded and licensed. Dele-

gates, however, did favor jobbers and commission merchants being bonded and licensed, but that truckers be only licensed, and the fee be \$5 a year.

Equipment Tariff.

Mr. Fisher explained that there is now a tariff of 25 per cent. on spraying equipment, apple-graders, apple-wipers, etc., coming from the United States. The previous duty was only 10 per cent., but last fall the Bennett Government increased it to 25 per cent. As only a small volume of insecticides and spraying equipment, apple-graders, etc., were made in Canada, and thus there were no Canadian industries to protect, did the growers want this duty removed or left as it was? Mr. Fisher asked.

John Bridgman and Colonel Armand Smith of Winona said the growers should be consistent. They had asked for protection of their own products and had obtained it, and they would lay themselves open for criticism, it was feared, if they asked for free trade on equipment they needed.

Finally the convention adopted a resolution that the Federal Government be asked to remove the 15 per cent. additional duty imposed last autumn and leave the tariff at 10 per cent., as it was originally.

Mr. Fisher then told of how the Horticultural Council last fall had approached the Federal Government and urged, in behalf of Ontario canners, that the dump duty on pears from the United States be removed, as supplies here were exhausted, and the canners had to obtain American pears to complete their packs. Did the delegates, Mr. Fisher asked, favor similar action being taken this fall to aid the canners? By a vote the convention showed it was not in favor of such action, as it was felt that plenty of pears would be available here for Ontario canners, provided they offered a decent price.

Mr. Fisher Resigns.

Mr. Fisher, with some trace of annoyance, then announced his resignation as Chairman of the Committee on Legislation. He had tried to serve the growers for the past nine years in that position, he said, but apparently had not succeeded.

The meeting tendered him a hearty vote of thanks for his services.

Delegates approved of an application being made to have the freight rates on live sulphur and other spray material reduced to the same level as fertilizers.

Hon. T. L. Kennedy, Minister of Agriculture for Ontario, addressed delegates at the noon luncheon, and paid tribute to Commissioner Somerset for his report, which the Prime Minister of Ontario had characterized as a distinct contribution to the welfare of the fruit growers of the Province. Colonel Kennedy said that a bill, incorporating certain recommendation of benefit to the fruit growers, would shortly be submitted to the Legislature. It was the duty of the Government, he said, to do something for the farmers, and he urged the growers to co-operate with the Government to bring about the improvements asked for.

J. B. Fairbairn, Deputy Minister of Agriculture, also spoke of the Somerset report, and commended it to the careful attention of all growers.

Cider Industry.

The opportunity which exists in Ontario and other parts of Canada for the establishment of a cider industry, similar to that in England, was stressed in a paper prepared by M. B. Davis of Ottawa and read by W. T. Macoun of Ottawa. Apple growers would be able to sell most of their low-grade apples with such an industry in this county. Experiments were being made and there was no doubt the project was feasible, Mr. Davis stated.

Other papers dealt with at the morning session included "Summer Sprays and Spray Practices," by Dr. H. W. Dye of Middleport, N.Y.; "The Ontario Fruit Industry, From the Buyer's Standpoint," by Karl B. Conger of Ottawa, and the report of the Traffic Committee, by Colonel H. L. Roberts of Grimsby, who said the railways had agreed not to withdraw the commodity rates on apples between Ontario and Western points.