

Meeting the Fruit Fly Situation

Judge S. L. Holland, Bartow

All my life, since I started as a substitute on the baseball team, I have been pinch-hitting for somebody else. Today, Mr. Griffin should have been here. A few days ago, I was invited to fill the place instead. I can say, though, that just as I used to be delighted when the courts would invite me in to pinch-hit for somebody, I am frank to confess, I am happy to be here, to speak on the subject which brings me here. I don't come to profess any knowledge from a scientific standpoint concerning the Mediterranean Fruit Fly. That subject has already been handled and handled by men who with one other added could have given you the most scientific treatise upon it that could be given by anybody on top side of this green earth, Dr. W. C. O'Kane and Dr. Wilmon Newell. I am only sorry Dr. A. C. Baker is not here so that the three men whose opinions are entitled to the most weight on that subject could have spoken to you.

I have been asked for a talk upon this phase of the matter, "What effort has been made by the organized business interests of the state, particularly of the Citrus Industry, to meet the situation that has been presented by the presence of the Mediterranean Fruit Fly? Have we sat down supinely to take whatever fate brought to us, or have we endeavored to

meet intelligently and energetically the problems presented so as to take care of ourselves as well as we could."

It so happens, that I have been, and am, council for the Florida Citrus Growers Clearing House Association. It is because of that fact that I am presumed to have some knowledge about the subject assigned to me. When I speak to you I speak solely as a citizen, and as a grower, and drawing simply upon the information and experience gained in connection with my capacity, which I have just mentioned; also in connection with other capacities wherein I have represented various citrus groups, the State Department of Agriculture, and others vitally interested in citrus production, horticulture and business in Southern Florida particularly, but within the whole state. It seems to me in the beginning (and we should go back to the beginning) that we found ourselves up against this sort of a situation. The fly was here. Many flies were here. We knew it. We were told that its presence here created a tremendous danger, a tremendous hazard to us. We found out that the Federal Department of Agriculture had some knowledge of the situation, with reference to their presence, and with reference to the danger afforded by their presence to different portions of the na-

tion. Many states of the Union shared our apprehension as to the danger afforded by the presence of that insect here.

Very soon we found out it was incumbent upon us to either go into the biggest battle ever waged by the State of Florida, with an organization of intelligence, and all the resources we could command, or else find ourselves wiped quietly off the map. I want to tell you that it is my opinion that the measure of co-operation which has been shown by the business interests, and particularly the citrus interests of the State of Florida in meeting this emergency has far transcended any co-operation ever shown in this state heretofore. I want to relate what has happened, so you may know that from the very beginning the citrus interests and other business interests, realizing what we were up against, have gone ahead with the utmost of diligence, industry and intelligence, to try to do what they could in solving our problem and the nation's problem.

Shortly after the discovery of the fly, you will find in the minutes of the Directors of the Florida Citrus Growers Clearing House Association, which is certainly the most representative group in the State, a resolution in which there were stated four objectives, to which that association dedicated itself in connection with the Mediterranean Fruit Fly problem. You will find them stated, I believe, in about this order:

1. Pledging that organization to do everything possible to promote the campaign for the control and eradication of

the fly, looking to that end—the eradication of the fly.

2. To do everything that was possible to enable the citrus grower to continue to produce his crop.

3. To do everything that was possible to market his crop, so he might exist as he produced—exist and co-operate; and

4. That adequate compensation should be, in due time, asked for those citrus growers who found themselves in the path of this thing.

That was adopted in May, 1929. You will find from that time forth no departure, no lapse on the part of that organization, from that schedule of things to be done in which they should devote themselves, in standing for the good, and promoting the welfare of the largest industry of the State.

In May there went to Washington the first committee from this organization—Mr. J. A. Griffin, Mr. Earl Wirt, Mr. W. M. Scott, a member of the American Fruit Growers, and Mr. J. C. Chase and Mr. Walter Rose from the Florida Citrus Committee. That committee served very diligently. Members of that committee have been back from time to time, since that time, on several occasions — Mr. Griffin particularly has been there. I think all his time would make a month or more, from that time to this.

Shortly following that, it became apparent that it was necessary to have public council to represent this state, and particularly the Citrus Industry, in its contacts with the Public Bureaus at Washington. You will recall that Mr. Peter O. Knight volunteered his services to the Citrus Industry and to the State of Flor-

ida, and I want to tell you, and I make no apology for telling you, that in my opinion the State of Florida and the Citrus Industry in particular can never repay adequately the debt of gratitude it owes to Mr. Peter O. Knight. Let me tell you what he did. He has been to Washington on several occasions, one time in August two weeks; one time later in the fall four weeks, fighting diligently for some of these things that some of the opposed just discovered months later, namely, for the right to ship non-processed fruit into the immediate West, and other things which we have been fighting against too, which have seemed to those in authority to be necessary parts of the campaign of eradication. Mr. Knight has been there, time and time again. He has spent many days there, devoting almost all of his time, since last August, to this work. If you could see the files he has developed, showing his contact in the many places where he has had to make contact you would begin to be appreciative of what he has done.

The articles which appeared in the Manufacturers Record were written at the request of Mr. Knight; look in the New York Sun and the Boston paper, which has been so friendly to us; look in the pages of numerous other publications. You will find therein what he has done. Look in the South, and you will find the Commissioners of Agriculture, throughout the South have correspondence which ended in a combination of the Southern States, friendly to us, which correspondence was to the effect that they were being properly and adequately protected at Washington, and could well afford to join

with us on our common problems and rely solely upon Washington to protect them. They were seeking to draw around other restrictions of their own.

I am giving these things as side lights in the activities of other men, who along with Dr. Wilmon Newell, Dr. A. C. Baker and Dr. W. C. O'Kane are due to be always remembered with gratitude by the citizens of the State of Florida.

The time came when it was necessary to determine whether or not the trees in Zone 1 area should be maintained on the shade tree basis or not. You know what the first quarantine provided on that subject. You know it was thought fruit could not be developed, or picked, or permitted to be matured in that area. I want to tell you that the most diligent and continuous and inspiring efforts were put out by the leaders of the industry so that along with the representatives or those in authority in Florida in this campaign, there was sufficient conviction brought to bear, that that particular thing was changed, and Zone 1 fruit was able to mature and later to be marketed.

Other things were done. Other things were permitted. So finally we were permitted to market the fruit which we produced this year.

Looking back a year ago, and considering what was told us then, and much which we merely surmised—that we would never probably live as an industry and organized community thus far along, but we have lived and lived happily. It is true we have had some restrictions, but we have marketed practically our full crop, and because of the reaction of the

industry in the making of a tremendous effort to protect itself, we have marketed to great financial advantage, so we are really in better shape to fight the pest, and we are in better shape to carry on the campaign than we were a year ago today. That is something that probably has never occurred in the course of a campaign of this sort before, I am told—the permitting of the marketing of what we produce, and the marketing of it under such conditions that we are able to get a fair return for it.

Now those things did not just happen so, and I wish that there were time and opportunity here to go into all of the details that have to do with the opening up of the markets, with the permitting of the shipments, and particularly with the control of the shipments, in such a way as to prevent the glutting of markets and the disaster that would necessarily follow it.

You people directly in the Citrus Industry know as well as I that when the marketing time came along, so far as unrestricted shipments were concerned, we were confined to the Northeastern States, a relatively small area; and you know those restrictions imposed were such that we did not ship in the beginning, and never to the extent which we normally ship, into those other areas. Unless there had been the most careful planning and foresight exercised, so there could not be a glut, there would have been injected into that Northeastern area a glut the like of which never happened before, and it would have destroyed confidence to a greater degree than we ever suffered.

One of these two things was necessarily going to happen—either we were going to

have a great breakdown of confidence in the markets of the nation, or else we were going to have to get together so as to build confidence in Florida fruit greater than had existed heretofore, because we knew we had to market in the Northeastern area a greater quantity of fruit, despite the fact that we had only half as much on the trees as we had marketed the year before. So the Citrus Industry appreciated those problems, with no intention of letting the first occur, but with every intention of letting the second come about—to build a bigger confidence in Florida fruit.

I wish you had a birdseye picture, as I have. I always read the minutes of the Operating Committee of the Clearing House, to see what has been done along that line. Do you know, in spite of the fact that we had a crop only about half as great as last year, we have marketed in the Northeast more fruit than we did last year? That is an astounding statement, and we would think if that were true, necessarily we would have taken an enormous licking in the marketing of that greater volume of fruit. But to the contrary, as the shipping has been prorated among the shippers, and the buying trade has been willing to co-operate, there has been maintained a high level of prices; there has been the greatest consumption of grapefruit in that area ever known, with a profit per box for auction sales 73c greater than auction sales of grapefruit last year.

I wish time permitted going into it from the standpoint of private sales, because in every particular it will show you

the Citrus Industry of the state, realizing it was confronted with a terrific condition, got together in a way it never got together before, agreeing to pro-rate those shipments, and they stood by that, and they created in the large markets similar pro-rating conditions, so the receivers themselves might know they could count on shipments. By the creating of that confidence, they did something they never had been able to do before in the history of the marketing of citrus fruit.

I want to say to you, the Citrus Industry has risen to the challenge, and so far as the market is concerned, it has so satisfactorily solved the problem that it has received vast, and I am sure lasting benefit from the experience of getting together and making something good out of something that looked bad, and making confidence when it appeared that we were going to have such a lack of confidence.

Let us come to other features of the situation, which I think are equally appropriate, and equally show the willingness of the industry to rise to the situation. You will recall that the request for an appropriation is not a Florida request; it comes from the Secretary of Agriculture to the President, and goes to Congress, asking for money. You will recall we were requested not to go to Washington, in the beginning, because it was admitted it was a national problem. They did not want it to be a request coming from Florida. Later we found out we needed help. How did the Citrus Industry react? If you read the papers during the hearing at Orlando, you might

have gotten the impression that a large part of the Citrus Industry decided they did not want any appropriation; that they were going to get the fruit fly out of existence, and were not going to co-operate with anybody in solving the problem.

Now, I want to tell you what the Citrus Industry did. Every Director in the Clearing House voted for a resolution, backing the United States Department of Agriculture and the State Plant Board of Florida, expressing confidence and appreciation, and requesting the President and Congress to go ahead without delay, and without fail, to appropriate that needed money, in order that the thing might be solved. But it did not stop with the directors of the Clearing House. When you come down to the shippers themselves, you find all those shippers, who stand for the largest number of growers, lined up behind the effort. What was the effort? To get that money appropriated so the task might be finished, and the fly forever banished from Florida and the United States.

But was the Industry alone standing there? No, indeed. No sooner had it been discovered that such an effort was being made than there came requests from outstanding business men to be allowed to join in the presentation of the appeal to Congress; that this was of vital importance, that the appropriation had to be had, in order that Florida could be free and not looked upon by the states of the Union as a leper. The State Bankers' Association requested the right to join, the State Chambers of Commerce and the State Realtors' Associations; Alabama, Georgia and Florida doing the same; the

executive committee of your Society doing the same, and appointed your honorable President to sit on that committee as a representative of the people, so they might be heard. The Florida Citrus Committee, and other great and powerful groups asked to be aligned on the side of constructive work for Florida, and the finishing up of this business of eradicating the Mediterranean Fruit Fly. If you got the idea from reading the papers that every Tom, Dick and Harry who were sitting on their front porch with a shot-gun, represent the real people in the Citrus Industry, or any business industry of the state, get that out of your head.

The facts are what I have just given you. I want to say to you that the constructive, far-sighted, unselfish business men and interests of the State of Florida, are fully united in this problem and believe by all means that we better live without this fly than live with it. What's the situation? You need not think all these men went ahead blindly. The committee examined all possible sources, conferred with entomologists from about ten or twelve other states, not connected with the United States Department of Agriculture, wrote countless letters everywhere. I have a letter written from the Consul General at Paris to the State Entomologist of Georgia. The State Entomologist of Georgia did not want to be wrong, and so he wrote over there. He wrote to find out what the facts were, and I have that original letter in my office. The Consul General writes back, and says the Mediterranean Fruit Fly has been in Paris since 1900. Paris has a temperature a little colder than Nashville. He

says "It is not a pest right here, not generally regarded as a serious pest, because we have it early." But to show you that these people in Georgia, Alabama, Texas and California have something to worry about, he stated this—that about half of the area of Southern France, which is adapted to the production of peaches, plums and apricots, is infested, and in that area only three per cent of the total crops was produced, because they found they could not produce them on a commercial scale. The other percentage was produced in the other area.

We did not proceed blindly, but we sought information. We investigated with the officials of these other states to see what we could expect from them, supposing the Federal appropriation fails. They said "Well, we can't do anything; we have a state law that puts a duty on us. If there be brought into the United States an insect which is new and dangerous, and it is outside the limits of our state, our duty is clear, we have to safeguard our people and our interests. We can not do less than that."

Just look at North Carolina, the peaches and other fruits that are produced there, in a climate not so vastly different from Northern Florida, and consider the fact that there were found adult flies in two places in North Carolina, that came out of Florida citrus fruits. We could not blame them.

We did not know what we would have to expect, and realizing that we were up against a situation where there had been flies, and that the Federal Government agreed with us that they were dangerous,

and the people of the other states agreed with us—we came up against this proposition—is it best for us to try to live with them or live without them?

If we live with them, what does it mean? J. C. Chase gave me some figures. He had a certain grove which he had a chance to develop the figures on, as to the amount required for the control of the Fly. It cost him in that grove under unusually favorable conditions something over ten cents a box; F. M. O'Bryne thinks it is twenty cents; another big producer thought it would be twenty-five cents. But put it twenty cents a box, and consider the proposition presented. It will cost Florida six million dollars to live with the Fly. That doesn't count in some of the biggest items, or consider the result of shipping earlier in the year, the curtailment of area where we could ship our fruit. And those blooming quarantines—we can't change them. We have just got to expect them. If we go on a control basis we can expect them to be more drastic, because when you have it on a control basis, an isolated area being kept away from the rest of the United States, watch what would happen from those other states. They do not know where that line is; it is wholly imaginary, and with the greater share of it under danger of more drastic quarantine and embargo. Control will cost us infinitely more than eradication, if the state had to pay for all of it. The state can not pay for all of it, but let me tell you this: Those men who are sitting in the Governor's Cabinet, and the Governor himself showed us they understood how grave this situation is, because when we

went there, thinking that because they had been removed from the work that they might not have the proper prospective as to how dangerous the situation was, we found out we had been fooled. Without any legislative or executive session they stopped us in the middle of our presentation and said "We know that is the situation; we are going to help you and give you of the state funds whatever is necessary, whatever we can give to see the thing that is done is not undone, and that the other measures we can finance are held together." The state is doing that. It is keeping the Mediterranean Fruit Fly area within the same 15,000 square miles instead of about 40,000.

What have the industry and the citrus growers got to do? I can tell you what the operators within the Clearing House agreed to do. They agreed with Dr. W. C. O'Kane. (He ought to have been a banker or something like that.) He made the prettiest trade with the operators of the Clearing House! He says "I will give you fifteen days extension of the designated shipping period if you will agree to clean up, not leave any fruit on the trees served by your respective operations." We accepted, and that means spending about \$400,000 actual cold cash out of the pockets of the operators agreeing to live up to that gentleman's agreement. It means that money is going to be spent; it is as good as spent now. They are going to live up to it. It does not bind every grower or operator or people living close to sub-divided properties, etc., but it means that unless the people rise to the test, and do this thing, which can't

be done now by the Federal Government, because Mr. Wood is fiddling away up there, this \$400,000 is wasted in the first instance, and besides that the problem is made eminently greater. So I think this organization will make that resolution, as your President has asked you.

But do not be content with that. The one thing I would like to drive home above all others is—That you go home not only satisfied that you have done your duty here, by voting for the resolution, but satisfied that the only way you can do your duty is to see that your particular community is cleaned up, clean as a whistle. If we can do that, we have two big things done, regardless of whether we get our congressional appropriation or not.

With reference to the appropriation, a few words. Some people think it was a partisan political fight up there. It was not. There is nothing more ridiculous than that, that could be said. Here was a Republican President, a Republican Secretary of Agriculture and a Republican Director of the Budget, asking for something to be spent in this state, and supported by that committee, composed of such men as E. L. Wirt, B. L. Hamner, Judge Allen Walker, A. M. Tilden and W. R. O'Neal. I think there were six or seven on our committee of twenty-two men who were Republicans, and outstanding Republicans of this state. It just happened so that they were on the committee, but it clearly showed it was not any partisan political proposition. What was it? I believe this is what it was. Dating back a good many years, there has been apparently a feud between

Mr. Wood, the chairman of that committee who belongs to the majority-party, and the Department of Agriculture, or Dr. Marlatt. It would appear that dates back to the corn-borer days in Indiana, perhaps the beginning of it before that time, and was something that was taken advantage of by two men who happened to be politicians in this state, but who happened to be disgruntled over something in connection with the citrus industry, and who played upon that situation, until it came very near strangling the citrus industry in Florida.

Partisan politics! It is not partisan politics. It is just as dangerous, and I am afraid it has put us under a handicap that will take a long time to get out from under. To think that men like Drs. Newell, Baker and others have poured out their energy twenty-four hours a day, just working to one end, and then have the thing undone by a bunch of pettifogs!

I am afraid we are losing, but we can at least do those things that can be done to clean up. I know there will be thousands of us using this copper carbonate spray three or four times, if necessary, until this thing comes along.

Another thing! I have several recent reports from Washington, all to the effect that it is believed there that the appropriation substantially is going through within a matter of days. I hope, sincerely, with all my heart, that it is true, and if it is, let us not again let any split or foolishness of opinion, affect us. The nation is not against us; every state in the Nation is for us; the Republican party is not against us, nor is any agency ex-

cept a few of us here, within our own groups. By no means, ever let the situation arise where a few men can get us led astray on things that are not fundamental.

I think this organization can do a vast service. Your President says "As long as you have got money here to build roads with, or for any of these constructive purposes, I feel like every cent of that money, if necessary, should be spent on this eradication business, until we get rid of every last fly."

So, in closing, just let me say that it has been a privilege to come here. Only one other thing I want to say—I have

observed simply as an outsider, and yet knowing something of what is going on in the citrus industry and business interests of this State, that 95 per cent of the real foundation people are behind this thing, and realize the gravity of the situation, and will not withhold any of their support and influence, but will demand this thing be put across, if it is humanly possible to do it, and I appeal to this Society, to use every bit of effort it can, not in working for this, but in working for the industries of the State of Florida, and the people of Florida, and of the Nation, in seeing that this eradication campaign is successfully concluded, until the last fly is gone.