

# Address

---

By E. L. Wartmann, Citra, Florida

Mr. President, I wish that these gentlemen who are talking about the freeze would stop it. If Mr. Hastings had not said that it cost the lives of a good many people in Florida I would be willing to say that the freeze was a good thing. I maintain that the freeze is worn out. I am not going to talk about the freeze. I am going to talk about the Plant Board, the Horticultural Society and what the Horticultural Society has done for the Plant Board. As a member of the Plant Board, I want to express my thanks to you tonight for your hearty co-operation and for standing behind us through this battle in fighting citrus canker.

I remember in 1913 when canker was first laid upon the table at the meeting of the Board of Control, it aroused my curiosity. It being found in the citrus belt, I had a feeling it was something that was probably very, very dangerous to the industry. It wasn't long until the Horticultural meeting was held. We heard from Dade county of the manner in which citrus canker was working in on their industry. In 1915 some who are present tonight were attending the sessions of the Legislature of Florida appealing to them to create a Plant Act, and to give them \$125,000 with which

to eradicate canker. I think it was some time in early May, during that session, that a resolution was passed by the Horticultural Society appealing to the Legislature to grant the request and to pass the bill. There was no more trouble after that for the \$125,000 came and also the bill creating the Plant Board.

We were given the task of eradicating citrus canker, something we knew nothing in the world about. At that time we didn't know that canker was a bacterial disease and something that could not be cured by spraying, and that the only way to control it was by burning. We found later on after we began to organize the work that we had to go to the Horticultural Society for help. The bill granted us the right to appoint and elect a Commissioner but we could not find a suitable man. We went to the Horticultural Society and gathered three men as an Advisory Committee who were to serve without pay and to help us organize and carry the work on.

Again, along in 1917, the Horticultural Society endorsed a bill giving \$300,000 of the taxes of the people of Florida to the Plant Board to aid in the eradication of citrus canker. Not only did it appeal to Florida, but it also appealed to the national government

which responded readily. In all, I, as a member of that Board, have helped to expend a little over \$1,100,000 of public money. You heard Mr. Hamner say a few minutes ago that the orange crop of Florida for this year alone was worth \$30,000,000. Wasn't that money well spent? As Prof. Rolfs has said, I believe that we have citrus canker practically eradicated from the State, something that has never been known in the world. The eradication of a disease, such as this which has attacked the citrus trees of Florida, has never before been accomplished. I want to say here in behalf of the State Plant Board, to the Horticultural Society, that we owe you a debt of gratitude. You have stood behind us and held up our arms when we were carried into the courts. You said "sit steady in the boat, boys, sit steady." We were carried into the courts, and we stood all kinds of abuse and criticism in some

sections of the State, but we have won. Citrus canker was found in twenty-two counties in Florida, and in four hundred and sixty-eight properties at one time, and tonight I stand here, believing that we have citrus canker practically eradicated, because we do not know of a single case in the State.

Gentlemen, I am doubly proud that you should come to Marion county. I want to correct the statement made by one of your officials that Marion county was out of the citrus belt; he is simply shouting to the moon when he says it, because Marion county developed the greatest orange known in history today—the Pineapple orange; and the next choicest—the Parson Brown, referred to by Mr. Hamner—originated in or near the edge of this county. I say that we are in the citrus belt and if you people will simply stop talking about the freeze and look around, you will find it out.