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HILO FARMERS DISCUSS THE PINEAPPLE INDUSTRY

Mr. C. H. Bentley of the California Fruit Canners' Association Visits Hilo for the Purpose of Co-Operating in the Establishment of a Pineapple Cannery.

"If we can be assured that the Hilo growers will plant 200 or 300 acres in pineapples within the next two or three years we will go ahead and establish a pineapple cannery," said C. H. Bentley last Saturday at a meeting of the Hilo Agricultural Society. Mr. Bentley is representing the California Fruit Canners' Association in the Islands and came to Hilo particularly at the suggestion of R. I. Lillie to investigate the pineapple industry with a view to establishing a cannery. Mr. Bentley came to Hilo after canvassing the situation in various parts of the Islands for ten days. His judgment was positive that the pineapple is a crop which will yield splendid returns to Hawaiian agriculturists. He was present at a meeting of the Hilo Agricultural Society last Saturday, and in a talk gave his opinion of what should be done. He said his firm had been considering the pineapple question for three years, but until Mr. Lillie came to them with details they had nothing definite to work on. In considering the establishing of a cannery two questions arose: What will the pineapples cost? and how many can we get? He said the larger the scale of the enterprise the larger would be the profit; that a ten ton daily capacity would run at about the same expense as a thirty ton daily output. He said that he finds lands differ in productive capacity and the fruit varies in quality. One thousand tons of pineapples must be available for the first year's operations. That would mean that we must draw from Maui, Kona and the surplus product of Oahu, which is larger than all the other Islands put together. He believed it wise to locate a main plant centrally and then establish branch canneries as the enterprise grew. The cost of the plant is a small item compared to expense of operation. A plant to turn ont 25,000 to 50,000 cases would cost $10,000. The chief outlay would be for labor, pines, cans and sugar. The outlay on such a plant would be perhaps $75,000 for the first year.

Mr. Bentley said he hoped to interest the plantation people, as he did not believe the required amount of fruit could be obtained from the small growers. If the plantations would plant pineapples in small areas not suitable for cane they would become the chief sources of supply.

He expressed his thanks for courtesies extended to him by the Hilo Railroad, Wilder S. S. Co. and the gentlemen present.

C. C. Kennedy of Waiakea said there is no doubt that a-a lands ripen cane better than other lands, and believed they contain from one to two per cent more saccharine than is shown in lands beyond the Wailuku. He had no doubt pineapples would make the same showing as cane. Cane takes what water it needs in a-a ground and pineapples would do likewise.

C. H. Bentley: Would the plantations take an interest in pineapple growing?

C. C. Kennedy: No; they have their hands full from the year's end to end.

Bentley: Have you no slack time?

C. C. Kennedy, I have been here twenty-five years and have found no slack time on our plantation. We have no spare time to devote to pineapples. We will give lands at a reasonable figure and will do what we can to help the pineapple enterprise.

President Furneaux said there is no lack of land suitable for pineapple growing. The members of the society represent 1,000 acres. The land is not the question.

George Paty said that the capital to handle the land was the question.

In reply to a question from H. E. Kelsey, a Kaiwiki grower, Mr. Bentley explained at length the care necessary to be taken in handling the fruit before delivery at the cannery. The pines should not be less than three pounds in size.

The discussion ranged over the entire subject. Mr. Bentley concluded with the suggestion that the only way to get started is to make ten year contracts for the planting of ten, twenty or thirty acres, delivery to begin at a specified date. If enough would sign to guarantee delivery of fruit his people could have the cannery ready to receive the fruit.

From figures offered by members it was estimated that pineapples at $20 a ton would yield from $250 to $290 per acre.

The report of R. I. Lillie to the society follows:

Chas. Furneaux, Esq., Chairman Meeting Pineapple Growers:

Dear Sir:—I herewith annex report of result of inquiries in San Francisco relative to the cost of manufacture and market for canned pineapples, as member of committee along with Mr. Clement appointed at meeting in September:

Market—I find that there is no difficulty in disposing of any reasonable number of cases, up to say 50,000 annually, provided two conditions are maintained: First, that the pines are put up in a scientific method, so that there are no swell heads or defective cans, and also that the pines themselves bear the necessary flavor to equal any existing pine on the market. Second, that the pines can be grown at a price that will allow a profit to the grower, the canner, and the merchant or broker.

On the first heading: There are Hawaiian canned pines on the United States market of which I have been told from absolutely reliable sources the percentage of swells alone run to 12½ per cent. This simply means a loss to all concerned and indicates improper or faulty manufacture, and points to the necessity of having one or more practical and thoroughly qualified men at the head of the cannery. Every merchant interested in canning fruit insisted that the success of any cannery depended on the man at the head of the working department.

On the second heading: The concensus of opinion is that in order to dispose of any large quantity and to meet the prices of Singapore and other pines a price to the consumer of twenty-five cents for a reputed three pound can is necessary. Hence the wholesaler must have a price of about $2.25 per dozen, and the factory price to the broker, who would act as distributor, must be about $1.75 per dozen net, which I gather is the price about which a cannery would have to be run to be able to place its output.

Cost of Manufacture—First: I am informed that a complete plant with building to make its own cans and put up say 10,000 to 20,000 cases during the short season would cost say $8,000 to $10,000, and with any smaller output than 10,000 cases such a cannery would not pay. The cannery machinery for a small cannery—boilers, pans, etc. (without can making machinery or including building), might be got together for $1,000 or $2,000, but in that case cans and cases would have to be imported, and as a competent head is considered indispensable I do not see that a small cannery would be a success. Cans cost about thirty cents per dozen, cases seven cents per dozen, and labels five cents per dozen. Two freights would add to expenses, so it appeared to me that many difficulties came in the way of beginning on a small scale. I spent considerable time in interviewing such people as Tillman & Bendel, Suss-

(Continued on Page Three.)

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