

DIGEST OF REMARKS BY DIRECTOR A. F. YAGGY APROPOS OF HIS RECENT TRIP THROUGH THE EASTERN MARKETS IN THE INTEREST OF THE AVOCADO EXCHANGE

Last Fall it was apparent that early this year the avocado crop would be larger than we could sell advantageously on this coast and I was asked to be ready to go East to arrange for reliable, efficient connections in the large markets and to educate them in handling avocados, to supervise their work and to supplement it with dealer service work with the retailers, hotels, clubs, etc.

In the first week in March the trade on this coast was saturated and at even such low prices as 30 cents a pound. On March 14th I arrived in Chicago and after several days spent in consulting the best posted advisers and in canvassing various recommended commission houses and brokers, decided on a firm who seemed specially fitted for our needs because: They are dependable and their manager a man of splendid business and private reputation; they are dealing in three high-priced perishable commodities that go to the same class of trade that can buy avocados, namely, hot-house cucumbers tomatoes, mushrooms; they are used to handling these products quickly through small sales and wide distribution, having over 500 jobbers and chain stores on their regular list; they have their own store and sales force in the heart of the new produce section of Chicago; they agree to handle Calavo Avocados only; they sell at prices we fix by wire; they assume all credit responsibility for goods sold.

Previous business with our fruit gave them confidence in our brand Calavo and to see it stamped on fruit and boxes added to their enthusiasm. They became eager for full information about varieties, seasons, storage, etc. The fact that we and we only could supply them quality fruit under a dependable brand the year around made them and all other representatives of ours in the East feel ready and willing to put a lot of time and energy into introducing and pushing the sale of our avocados.

The word "Calavo" made an excellent means of introduction. Our energetic manager, Mr. Hodgkin, had some cards printed for me a few minutes before I left for the East. Up in the corner of the cards, printed in its new avocado-shaped type, was the word "Calavo." In every office entered I called attention to that word and urged my hearers to memorise it now and suggested that whether it aroused their interest now or not it certainly would within a year or two because it represented to the produce trade for avocados what Sunkist does in oranges and lemons, and Sunmaid does in raisins and Diamond Brand in walnuts, and if they did not handle Calavo avocados now the day would soon come when they'd be trying to make up for lost time and when that day came they'd find out that Calavo, stamped on box and fruit stood for a dependable, uniform pack of the richest, highest-quality avocados that conscientious service could supply them, twelve months a year.

After establishing the Chicago agency and working for a week on some of the larger

and more promising accounts there, including the largest restaurant in the world, fancy grocers, hotels, dining car systems, etc., our shipments picked up to about six times what they had been at about double the price we had been getting out on this coast. Easter trade was especially good and accounts for some of this. Next year we must make a special effort at Easter time.

Detroit is a more limited market and the principal hotels and clubs there were already buying our avocados through New York; as one of the hotel stewards said: "When we want very fancy pears for special occasions."

In Boston our representatives are a splendid old, well-established firm whose reputation among the fanciest trade in Boston and New England generally seemed to be most enviable. With the active head of the firm I called on many of the dealers who do a large fancy fruit business in the center of Boston, and in its best residence districts, and from our reception and the interest manifested in Calavo it was apparent that our representatives were highly respected. They are strongly in favor of the new crate holding one dozen "pears," as they always call them, because they arrive in best condition that way—are easier to sell to retail trade, especially to new customers who are afraid of buying too many at once—and they sell at a certain price per crate. They suggested also that when the Trapp avocados arrive on the market in the Fall that we supply a large avocado to compete with it, not small Mexicans.

Many of the best fruit dealers of Boston and other eastern cities are of Italian and Greek origin. Usually they are polite, progressive and appreciative of every chance to add a new and profitable product to their stock and thankful for any assistance in selling such products. Hence, our little recipe leaflets, paper bags, window cards, although painfully simple in comparison with some of the very beautiful and artistic material supplied by our older and more prosperous California Exchanges, were much desired. Material of that sort must be sent East in increasing quantities as rapidly as we can find honest and efficient distribution for it to satisfy the keen interest that has sprung up. Boston has many people of wealth and discrimination and should soon become a great market for Calavo fruit.

In New York, where there are over 1200 fruit dealers and 2400 retail grocers listed in the telephone book, no one produce firm can adequately distribute any product alone, so our representative there is a large and reputable firm who sell to the wholesale produce trade only. They open at midnight when the whole produce section is as light as day, and do most of their business from midnight to 4 or 5 a. m., when they are supplying the wholesale trade, in preparation for the early morning retail trade. They stay open until 6 p. m.

I was curious to know what they did with all the rest of their time and the president told me that he has to have some time to plan the introduction of new products to the trade, a special branch of work in which they have become very proficient, judging by their campaigns in certain products that I was able to learn about. Starting with no knowledge of our product they have already been successful in a large measure in increasing our sales in New York. Their Philadelphia, Baltimore and Pittsburgh connections give wide scope to their activities.

In New York we already had some good customers who are responding to our efforts to

dispose of more fruit. One of them handles probably 75% of the hotel and steamship trade. As there are over 750 hotels in New York that amounts to something. For this hotel trade this firm doesn't care at all about our new crates to hold one dozen each. They want larger packages and smaller fruit, say three-fourths to one pound for most hotels. That size enables them to serve one-half of a fruit in a salad with no waste and at not too high a price. These people order 80 or 100 boxes from us at a time.

Like other dealers who know the merits of our pack, they are glad to see us use a brand and welcome the word Calavo on our boxes and our fruit.

In Washington we are well introduced. Calavo avocados are purchased for the White House table regularly. If we can't rest our case there we can take it to the Chief Justice's table where they are served, or to the Secretary of Agriculture's table where they have been in evidence for a long time. The man who sells to most of these homes constantly told me that there are no avocados like ours, and he is one of the best posted produce men I met. I criticized only one thing about his place and that was that all the Calavo fruit was stacked up in the most remote corner of his store and I suggested that he make at least a modest display of the handsome Calavo Brand fruit. But he shouted, "No; I have been trying to save those eight or ten boxes for a banquet at the Willard Hotel to the South American newspaper men. I have wired Chicago and Los Angeles for duplicate shipments." Good advertising.

A half hour spent with one of the highest Government officials was the most interesting of my trip. Among other things he said: "You don't know how fortunate you are that you live in California where the marketing of crops is carried on in such a business-like manner—through efficient organization. I have on my desk a pile of appealing letters from a section where they are raising a wonderful product in abundance, but can't seem to get together to sell what they have raised.

Bernard Baruch once said: "It is the man, rather than the organisation, who "will win or lose for the co-operatives." We have the man, Hodgkin;, let's stick to him and make sure that he wins.