

PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS

PRESIDENT WM. H. SALLMON

Chula Vista, Calif.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

In opening this fifth annual meeting of the California Avocado Association, it is a satisfaction to be able to state that our affairs are in a sound condition and we are on a firm foundation. We do not have to face the specter of a debt for more than 100 new members have been added during the year, making a gain of about \$500 in our net resources and with all bills paid, we have in the bank a comfortable balance of more than \$1,500. The receipts for the year were \$1,725.78, and the disbursements, \$961.16. It is well known to the leaders, and should be known by all our members, that these results are chiefly due to the untiring work of Dr. Hardin. In spite of health conditions which would have caused many men to seek absolute rest, he has carried the burdens of the combined office of Secretary and Treasurer with devotion and has exhibited qualities of business efficiency which have been an inspiration to us all. He has prepared the minutes of all meetings of directors and members, has carried on a large correspondence, increasing in volume, has collected the material for the annual report, has received and disbursed our funds, has supervised the printing of 7,500 circulars and notices during the year, and 1 00,000 additional copies of that neat sticker, "Eat Avocados," which was his own thought and design. His duties have been so manifold and the welfare of our industry so consistently in his heart, that he calls to mind the words of the great apostle, who after recounting his labors added, "Besides the things that I omit, things that come out of course, there is that which presseth upon me daily, anxiety for all the churches." We face with dismay the fact that Dr. Hardin feels obliged to retire from these duties, but we hope to retain his wise counsel as a director, at least until his term expires in 1922, and we hope that before that time he may again become a grower of avocados and so realize in his own experience some of those fine ideals which he uttered at our annual dinner in Pasadena a year ago.

The directors entrusted with the affairs of this Association during the past year were Chas. D. Adams, of Upland; T. U. Barber, of Puente; H. J. Webber, of Berkeley, term expiring in 1920; J. M. Elliott, of Los Angeles; Lester Keller, of Yorba Linda; Wm. H. Sallmon, of Chula Vista, term expiring in 1921 ; W. L. Hardin and Mrs. J. T. Stewart, of Los Angeles; A. F. Yaggy, of Santa Barbara, term expiring in 1922. The board has held six meetings and four members have a clean record for attendance at all of them, two missed only one meeting. The officers of the previous year were re-elected by unanimous vote, and the president presented to the board a proposed program of activities, outlining some of the things to be aimed at in 1919-20, as follows:

AVOCADO PROGRAM—1919-20

Some of the things to be aimed at:

1. Increase Membership to 300.
2. Study marketing problems,
 - (1) Steps to assist members in sale of fruit.
 - (2) Steps toward elimination of marketing unfit fruit.
 - (3) Study how to pack for shipment.
 - (4) Standardize sale prices of varieties.
3. Continue study of varieties.
4. Co-operation of Rockefeller Institute in investigating uses of avocado for medicinal purposes.
5. Extend Educational Campaign,
 - (1) Leaflet on "Avocado as Food."
 - (2) Leaflet on "How to Select a Good Avocado and Prepare for the Table."
 - (3) Prepared articles in press.
 - (4) Reprint, "The Avocado From Seed-time to Harvest."
6. Directors' Field Day for visits to groves.
7. Exhibit of Fruit at best season.
8. Encourage keeping of individual tree records.
9. Steps toward securing qualified man for sub-tropical fruit investigations.

It will be interesting to the members to hear what has been accomplished in some of these directions.

1. *Membership:* With a membership of 161 two years ago and 216 last year, it was felt that we might reasonably seek to attain the 300 mark this year. And it is a pleasure to report that we attained it. There are now enrolled 301 bona fide members in addition to 8 honorary members. This increase of new members for the year, breaks all our previous records. Most of the additions are secured by the work of the Secretary through correspondence, and by appeals at the semi-annual meetings. Other methods suggestive of the "campaign" or "drive," have been tried from time to time, but with little or no success. The Secretary is the mainspring in this matter because his position is constantly giving him the opportunity to present personal invitations to unite with the Association. In my judgment no secretary should be retained in office who will let the paying membership fall below the 300 mark now set, for the Association depends for its financial support almost entirely upon the income from memberships. And we should not delude ourselves by allowing inviting propositions to lead us into spending more

than our income in the vain hope of securing much more money thru additional memberships, for the constituency upon which we have to draw is limited and is likely to remain so.

2. *Marketing Problems:* Your directors have discussed the marketing of unfit fruit which has been brought to their attention. The abuse consists in dumping upon the market quantities of fruit blown down by the wind and in offering green fruit for sale. These appear to be individual matters which will be regulated by conscience and the laws of business, and eventually, when the supply of fruits warrants it, by government regulation. Not all windfalls turn out badly. Many of them mature properly, according to the testimony submitted at the meetings last year. But the percentage which withers or decays or is tasteless, is what harms the industry. Therefore windfalls, if marketed, should be sold as such and not be presented to the public as normal fruit. The problem of when to pick is more difficult. The writer of an article published last week, who states that for the past nine years he has been studying the avocado under local conditions, says, "One great fault at present is that fruits are picked while immature, taste like raw pumpkin, 'and one dose is enough.' We have found that they should be picked similarly to a pear, and also handled in a similar manner. The bud end becomes a trifle soft, and when the fruit is taken and gently lifted, if ready to pick, it loosens at the stem end, similar to a Bartlett pear. Then if left a few days to mellow it is ready for market." This sounds as if the gentleman has had experience, chiefly with Mexican varieties, for the case is not quite so simple with the Guatemalan varieties. Nature has provided a sure sign of ripening for such fruits as the Spinks, Dickinson, Sharpless and Puebla, which turn from green to purple and maroon, but it is not always possible to tell when fruits which mature green like the Taft, Fuerte, Blakeman, Lyon and Perfecto are ready to pick. The grower who is shipping his fruit some distance so that it is a week or more in transit cannot take the risk of waiting until the fruit is mellow. He must ship it in firm condition. Moreover, in shipping short distances it is not practicable to ship mellow fruit because some days may pass before the dealer effects a sale. Growers are not, therefore, to be accused lightly of shipping unripe or immature fruit.

Some action should soon be taken to assist members of the Association in the sale of their fruit. Growers here and there, who are favorably situated or who have established a reputation have no difficulty in disposing of the crops they raise at present to hotels and clubs, but we hear frequently of those who cannot market what they raise. The only feasible plan suggested thus far to meet this situation is to establish a selling agency in Los Angeles to handle fruit from our members on a commission basis. This may lead to the standardizing of prices per dozen for the approved varieties or to selling by the pound.

The adoption of a standard type of carrier to use in shipping California avocados has been urged upon the Association by Mr. L. B. Scott, who advocates the six basket crate as used by the growers in Florida. Reference to this standard carrier was made by Mr. George S. McClure in his article entitled, "What About the Avocado," printed in our annual report for 1918-19. The reasons advanced for adopting the six-basket crate are that it is known on the market and would, therefore, receive better consideration from the trade. It is also used for shipping tomatoes, peaches, plums, peppers, okra, persimmons and guavas and, therefore, there should not be much difficulty in obtaining

shook when shipments from California warrant the purchase of crate material in large quantities. In some of the Florida shipments the baskets are not used, the fruits being packed in the crates in excelsior. Mr. Scott points out, however, that the use of the baskets would be advisable in many cases as the original package could then be broken up and sold to several retailers. This in the case of avocados would be especially desirable in certain markets where the demand of any retailer in a single day might not amount to more than a few fruits. We have been informed that the Climax Basket, such as used in Florida, is not manufactured on this coast. The basket made here is known as a five-pound basket and crates are made to hold four of these baskets. I have had a sample made of the six basket crate according to the dimensions given in Specifications for Container for Fruits and Vegetables and Loading Rules of the United States Railroad Administration, also of the four basket crate, largely used in this State, and have placed them in the Exhibit for your inspection. We have also placed in the Exhibit samples of small crates as made by Mr. B. H. Sharpless, Santa Ana. Now is the time to take action upon the adoption of a standard carrier when the avocado production in California is relatively light.

3. *Study of Varieties:* The Committee on Classification of Varieties has met on the third Tuesday of each month to consider the merits of new varieties of avocados, and also to consider any additional data relative to any of the eight varieties already recommended. The work has been done chiefly by Messrs. Adams, Barber and Hertrich, the other members of the Committee, Messrs. Kinman, Scott, Shamel and Webber, having been so situated that they could not render much effective assistance. The report of the Committee, submitted to the members of the Association at the annual business meeting yesterday will be read this afternoon for your information.

4. *The Avocado for Medicinal Purposes:* The proposal to enlist the co operation of the Rockefeller Institute in investigating uses of the avocado for medicinal purposes was prevented by effects of the war. Meanwhile it has become likely that the men and equipment for such research work may be provided in our own state. That the avocado has such uses is indicated by the following testimony from one of our members, "For 35 years, I had been a chronic dyspeptic and up to the time I began eating avocados, I had about made up my mind that there was nothing I could eat without distress. Life was hardly worth while. But, sincerely speaking, I have found in the fruit a substitute for meat and eggs that I relish much more and that agrees with me to such an extent that no other rich foods ever did."

5. *Educational Campaign:* Mr. Elliott's address on "Utility and Sentiment applied to Avocado," and Dr. Hardin's address on "influence of the Avocado Industry on the Individual and the Community," have been reprinted and used in securing new members. The proposed leaflet on "The Avocado as Food," has been postponed until some reliable information can be obtained relative to the use of Avocados as a food for convalescents, and also as a food in the case of certain diseases. "How to Select a Good Avocado and Prepare for the Table," has also been postponed. Mr. Barber's address on "The Avocado from Seed-time to Harvest" is being brought down to date for publication. Several of the directors and members have prepared signed articles for the press, giving the results of experiment and experience and thus helping to counteract some of the misleading information which finds its way into public print.

Another educational feature worthy of note is an arrangement with the Citrus By-Products Laboratory in Los Angeles, by which all the fruit on one tree of each of the recommended varieties is secured to them for experimental purposes. This Association provides four trees and the U. S. Department of Agriculture provides four. In due time Professor Chace, director of the Laboratory, will give us the benefit of this research work which may lead towards a maturity standard for the avocado.

6. *Visits to Groves:* The directors at their own expense of time and money, have devoted a number of days to visiting avocado plantings. The ground covered included the San Fernando Valley, the Whittier district, the Foothill Boulevard, the Yorba Linda district and the Santa Ana district. The Committee on varieties also spent a day in the San Diego district. The opportunities for observation of the trees and the different methods of handling them and the comparison of notes with the growers were most valuable. Information gained in this way at first-hand, is extremely valuable to the leaders of an industry.

This recital will show the value in business of having a well denned program for a year's activities made out with as much care as a financial budget. We had something definite to aim at, and in reviewing the year's record we find that definite progress has been made. The projects of employing a Secretary on full time and of establishing a department of budwood selection, which will also involve the keeping of individual tree records, are advanced steps which promise intelligent development.

Our industry is still in the experimental stage and we have many unsolved problems to face. We have learned that the business of growing avocados is expensive and risky. While a good orange or lemon tree can be bought for 75 cents or a dollar, budded avocado nursery stock costs from \$3.50 to \$10.00 each, according to variety. It is an expensive business to start and also, an expensive business to maintain, for the avocado tree demands more watchful care and constant attention than the citrus tree. The business is risky because our experience in the culture of the avocado is limited, because much of the nursery stock grown in boxes and cans develops curled roots which result in weak and useless trees, because the tree is sensitive to wind, and to extremes of heat and cold and the location or the nature of the soil in which it is planted may not meet its requirements. Some varieties will thrive in one locality and others in another and the experiment of discovering the varieties adapted to each locality is costly. Prices for the fruit are high for this reason, and for the further reason, that the supply does not equal the demand. The Mexican varieties sold for \$1.50 to \$3.00 per dozen during the past winter, and the Guatemalan varieties are now bringing from \$5.00 to \$12.00, and even \$15.00 per dozen for very choice specimens. The fruit retails on the Los Angeles market from 75 cents to \$2.00 each. The retailer is the profiteer. The grower who bears the heavy expense of labor and who takes the risk of the business is receiving a comparatively high price for his product, but very few growers market enough to show any margin of profit. There are probably about 650 to 700 acres planted to avocados in California. With these and additional acreage in full bearing and with the accumulation of knowledge about the tree and its habits, which is one of the chief objects of this association, the prices will come down, and this "natural mayonnaise," which has a higher food value than any other known fruit, will become more generally available.