

California Avocado Association 1924-25 Annual Report 10: 28-30

OUR JOB

Address Given by Mr. Leo V. Youngworth

Dr. Coit and ladies and gentlemen: I have grown to be very fond of Dr. Coit and sometime ago he wrote me requesting that I say a few words to the avocado growers at this meeting. I told him I would be very glad to say a "few words" because that is about all I could intelligently say about avocados. Dr. Coit has been very kind to me and what success I have had has undoubtedly been due to the assistance that he has given me.

I was talking to a friend of mine the other day, who said, "How in the world do you get so sunburned?" "Why," I said, "I am a farmer—I am living on a farm." He said, "you say you are a farmer?" I replied, "I imagine that is what I am—I am living on a farm and am trying to raise avocados." He said, "I don't think you are a farmer yet"; and inquired if I had made any money raising avocados; to which I replied, "Not yet." Then he said, "You are not a farmer, you are an agriculturist." I said, "Why, I don't understand, what is the difference between a farmer and an agriculturist?" "Well," he said, "a farmer is a man who makes his money on the farm and spends it in the City, while an agriculturist is a man who makes his money in the City and spends it on the farm."

I imagine that I would measure up to both situations because as a small boy I farmed this particular land where I am at present employed and did make a little money raising hay, grain and such things as that; then I drifted off into the City and did fairly well and gathered together a little of the world's goods and went back to the farm; went back to the place that I had left thirty years ago.

I am, as Dr. Coit has said, particularly interested in the planting and developing of avocados. I have always been interested in the growing of trees. I was born in California and came to southern California as a boy in 1880. I have been over this countryside when it was practically a desert, and when the land was so barren it didn't look as if a jack-rabbit could live on it. I have seen the original pioneers come in with their enthusiasm, industry and undying persistency; they came and have made this the garden spot of the world. I have always felt that I wanted to do my share toward beautifying this wonderful country of ours and I have held this little ranch of mine for many, many years with that idea in mind, and when the time came I tried to do what I think everyone in California should do, develop our lands, and, if possible, make this country more beautiful. And so I have enlisted, like you, in the serious work of developing the avocado in southern California.

I have listened, with a great deal of interest, to the report of our Secretary as he gave to us his observations of this industry. It brought me back to the time when I was a boy, some thirty odd years ago, when the orange industry was in its infancy; I recall very well the experience of a very close and intimate friend of my father's who planted a very wonderful orange grove—took care of and developed a very fine matured fruit, shipped his product east, and all he got for his trouble was red ink; this he did, not only one year, but for several years he met with similar losses, until finally the losses were so severe

that he realised that unless something was done all his work and industry would be of no avail, and the growing of oranges would be a failure. So he, with others, organised the Citrus Growers Association, and today the growing of oranges is a safe, sound and successful industry. I remember him telling me the troubles that he had when he first endeavored to induce those who had groves and who were producing oranges and lemons to join in the formation of this organization, and of the different arguments and objections that were made in opposition, and of the many difficulties that had to be overcome, in order to perfect this association and save the producers from themselves. So as I listen to the report of our secretary I believe I can appreciate and understand the situation as difficulties that attended the efforts of those who organized the Citrus industry.

I have asked our secretary how many there were present tonight; he advised me there were one hundred and sixteen persons and that he had expected that there would have been at least three hundred. That would tell me that not half of those who are vitally interested in the avocado industry have taken the trouble to come and listen to these reports, or to make an investigation of the reports of those who are interesting themselves in this industry. It reminds me of the situation that I observed in a very progressive City a number of years ago when I attended Law School. During the time that I was there and about that time some of you will probably recall that there was considerable agitation over the country regarding the Alaska coal mines and the government's attitude on the disposition of the coal mines in Alaska. I remember that the country was very much worked up and there was much discussion, both in the newspapers and in meetings assembled by the people generally. I remember there was a great mass meeting held, presided over by the Mayor of the City, and on the stage were the various State, County and City officials. Vigorous speeches were made and the Alaska coal lands were discussed at great length with the result that strong and serious resolutions were unanimously adopted and sent to Congress. The meeting adjourned about eleven o'clock, and I remember very well the Mayor of the City gave those assembled to understand that the situation was serious and the very life of the Nation was at stake. Shortly after eleven o'clock, one of the principal school houses of the City was burned to the ground. The reason given was because of the inadequacy of the water supply, and the additional fact that the fire fighting apparatus of the City was inadequate, which made it impossible to force the water to a sufficient height to put out the fire.

Now that is about very much the situation here. It is generally the situation almost everywhere; we are very prone to interest ourselves in things that do not concern us directly and remain indifferent to matters that are of the most vital interest to ourselves. We devote unlimited time and attention in an attempt to solve the European situation while we sit idly by and see our school house burn down, our life work destroyed and our very existence threatened. Now this might appear to you to be an exaggerated comparison, but to me it is serious. Personally, I do not go into anything that I do not think worth while. I have not gone into this avocado proposition just for fun. I have three thousand avocado trees and I have spent a great deal of money, time and effort trying to grow these trees and I expect to spend a great deal more in an effort to produce proper fruit. I am seriously concerned as to what is going to happen to that fruit after I produce it and I am therefore intensely interested in this Avocado Association.

This is the day of organization; every industry is organized; there is the wholesale grocer and the retail grocer, the wholesale produce man and the retail produce man; it doesn't make any difference what industry you go into if it is successful you will find it organized. This is the day of organization. Now you and I (and I take it that we are here because we are interested in the avocado industry) have got to be on the job 100%; if we are not we will fail; and 100% includes and requires organization.

We have heard a lot about the self-made man, but in my humble opinion there is no such "an animal." It is the hard working, energetic man who reaches the top of the ladder; but in this day and age even he needs cooperation and assistance. The same thing applies to the avocado industry.

When Dr. Coit asked me to speak to you, I told him I would be very glad to because I wanted to do my bit; we have got to do this thing right and we are going to do it "right"; we have got to work together to make our industry a success. It is not enough to meet and elect officers. We must help them with our money and time; we have got to get in and do our share.

Fortunately at the top of these movements there are always men and women who have the industry at heart, and who have the ability to put it over in spite of those who want to let "John do it." I know that in this organization there are people of this type and it is up to us to encourage them and do our bit.

I understand from Dr. Coit that there are one hundred and fifteen acres in production now and that there have been planted approximately fifteen hundred acres. Now we have got to prepare for the future; there is no question but that that is one of the greatest problems confronting this industry. Now we have got to do something; we can't sit by and allow this heavy production to come upon us without some preparation; one dollar spent now will be better than one hundred dollars spent five years from now, so I hope that you ladies and gentlemen who are here tonight feel as I feel—that this is our business and that we are interested in it and that we are in it to see and make it a success and then I am sure that it will be a success.

Now we have about three hundred members in this Avocado Association and we should have five hundred members.

We are in debt about \$500.00; it is going to take money to put out this annual report and we can't stand by and wish that it be done. I asked Dr. Coit what there was for us to do and he said, "We ought to have more members; we have to have more members and more income if the Association is to pay this \$500.00 and its other expenses."

Therefore, I am going to make this request as coming from Dr. Coit that each of us here tonight pledge ourselves to secure as members of the Association, at least two avocado growers, and in the event that we don't do it, that we ourselves contribute \$10.00 toward the support of this organization. I am very glad to make that pledge and I hope that everyone here tonight, will realize, that it is up to you to do your share, and you can't do it by simply sitting by and looking on; you have to be active; you have to be industrious, if you want this industry to be successful.

I am very glad indeed to have had the opportunity of speaking to you and I hope that it will be the means of doing some good for our organization.