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ARE TOMATOES FOOD OR LUXURY?
An Interesting Point.

Question Discussed by the Tribunal.

An interesting discussion as to the relative values of grapes, tomatoes, etc., as food, was one of the features of the sitting of the Local Tribunal, which was held in the Mayors’ Parlour at the Municipal Offices on Wednesday afternoon, and, as will be seen from the appended report, the point is to be further considered at the next sitting.

In the absence of the Chairman (Mr. E. O. Pettit), the Hon. T. Duffield, and the other members present were Councillors E. Bradbury, E. Chapman, J. J. All horne, and S. Goodall, and Messrs. H. W. Hallis and G. O. Stent; together with the Clerk (Mr. J. Kennedy Allor) and the Military Representative (Colonel Brownes). The Military Position.

Mr. A. Burchell Dixon supported an application for a renewal of exemption previously granted to a fruit-grower’s foreman, who stated that he was solely interested in the growing of grapes, tomatoes, cucumbers, and other vegetables.

Colonel Brownes remarked that Mr. Dixon had better apply for a renewal to the War Office, as he intended to appeal. An Appeal Tribunal had recently raised the question as to how far it was right to be deplinshed in exempting men employed in producing fruit which could only be regarded as a luxury, for instance, peaches, or in growing tomatoes and other vegetables under glass, and the Central Tribunal were of opinion that if the article produced was a luxury, the exemption would be against the retention of a man in civil employment in order to maintain the production. But it was considered that the production was for export, or that a large number of persons depended on the business, and that persons under age of Military age were employed in proportion to the total number of persons affected; and each case must therefore be dealt with on its merits.

Mr. Dixon remarked that if this case was going to be refused on the ground that grapes, tomatoes, and other such things were a luxury, he would knock out practically every fruit-grower in the town.

The Chairman asked whether any of the grapes were exported?

Mr. Holmes: Oh, yes! A considerable quantity have been exported from my nursery this year. They go through the ordinary channels at Coven Garden Market.

Sent to the United States.

Colonel Brownes: Do you say grapes are exported?

Mr. Holmes: Yes, to New York. I have evidence that I can show you at home, if you like.

The Chairman suggested that the Military Representative wished to write a test case, the application had better be adjourned for further evidence of the applicant, and the point was agreed to.

A somewhat similar point was raised on another application by a fruit-grower for exemption for a nursery assistant.

Colonel Brownes remarked that the man might only be helping for the production of luxuries, and had evidence that it was not necessary that a man should be retained for such a purpose.

Make Out Their Case

and more that their particular grapes were exported.

Mr. Holmes said he believed that the greater part of this particular grower’s grapes would be exported because of their excellence. He could produce evidence if needed that his own last consignments had been exported. He contended that tomatoes were now one of the foods of the people, and he further pointed out that at present there were huge quantities of tomatoes coming into this country from Holland for which we had to send our gold away in payment.

The Chairman: And if you take all these men away, there will be still more gold going out of the country!

It was decided to adjourn the application to the next sitting, and the Chairman suggested to the applicant that if the fruit-growers had any Association they had better have the case put properly before the Tribunal.

In connection with an application by the Engineer and Manager of the Gas Company for a renewal of exemption of three employees, Colonel Brownes pointed out that only men working inside Gasworks were entitled to be exempted as in a certified occupation, and he took exception to any further exemption being granted to a main-lay, aged twenty-two, on the ground that a substitute ought to be found.

The Manager: We would willingly replace this man if we could.

Colonel Brownes: Surely he is not the only man in England who can repair mains?

The Manager: No, but those that are about are all being held by other Companies. It is Very Necessary Work,

and great danger might arise unless there was a competent man to do the work. I have known cases where gas has escaped from a broken main, and by getting into sewers has caused an explosion.

Colonel Brownes: We all know that. The question is whether it is necessary you should have a man of only twenty-nine to do the work.

The Manager: I have had a standing application at the Labour Exchange for six months, and have not been able to get anyone.

The Tribunal decided to grant two months for the main-lay, and the two gasers, one of whom is in a certificated occupation, and the other forty years of age, were each granted a further three months.

On the application of a firm of wholesale and retail grocers the Tribunal granted a further exemption for three months to a man who was described as a very efficient grocer, who was at the Labour Exchange, and the application by the same firm for a checker and lauder was refused, although the man himself was allowed two months on domestic grounds.

On the application of a Motor Bus Company three months further exemption was granted to a motor and electrical mechanic, a head clerk in the accounts department, a motor bus driver on the town service, and a coach builder, while the head of the traffic department was allowed one month further.

In connection with these applications Colonel Brownes contended that the town bus service was Not of National Importance.

but the Tribunal decided that it was.

Three months further exemption was granted to a builder and decorator, a sanitary engineer and undertaker, a hotel proprietor, an estate agent and solicitor, a coal merchant for Gas Company’s carriage contractor, coal porter and three coal carmen in the employment of a firm of coal merchants, and a fruit-grower’s foreman, two months for a goods single but with dependants, one month to a West Tarring tobacconist, and fourteen days to a traveller in foodstuffs and sweets, while an application for a dairyman’s assistant was refused.