

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 Mayor's 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. C. Patching, J.P.), Councillor H. T. Duffield presided, and the other members present were Councillors E. Braekley, Ellen Chapman, W. J. Gardiner, and G. Goodall, and Messrs. H. W. Hollis and G. C. Stent; together with the Clerk (Mr. J. Kennedy Allerton) and the Military Representative (Colonel Browne).

The Military Position.

Mr. A. Beckland Dixon supported an application for a renewal of exemption previously granted to a fruit-grower's foreman, who stated that he was solely engaged in the growing of grapes, tomatoes, cucumbers, and chrysanthemums.

Colonel Browne remarked that Mr. Dixon had better amplify his case if he wanted to, as he (Colonel Browne) intended to appeal. An Appeal Tribunal had recently raised the question as to how far they were justified in exempting a man 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 clearly a luxury, the presumption would be against the retention of a man in civil employment in order to maintain the production. But the consideration might be outweighed by other considerations, namely, the fact that the production was for export, or that a large number of persons depended on the business, and that comparatively few men 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 cucumbers were a luxury, it would knock out practically every fruit-grower in the town.

The CHAIRMAN asked whether any of the grapes were exported?

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

Sent to the United States.

Colonel BROWNE: Do you say grapes are exported?

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

The CHAIRMAN suggested that as the Military Representative wanted a test case, the application had better be adjourned for further evidence by the applicant, and this course was agreed to.

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

Colonel BROWNE remarked that the man might only be stoking for the production of luxuries, and he claimed that he was entitled to raise the point that it was not necessary that a man should be retained for such a purpose.

The APPLICANT handed in a letter from the Covent Garden salesman, which contained the following:

"We are sending a lot of best grapes every week to New York, and there is no demand here for luxuries of any kind. What we sell in England are chiefly for invalids and wounded soldiers. Have sent the best varieties and samples of grapes to America since the commencement of the War."

Colonel BROWNE remarked that it was for the fruit-growers to

Make Out Their Case

and show that their particular grapes were exported.

Mr. HOLLIS 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 best muscats 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 BROWNE 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-layer, aged twenty-nine, on the ground that a substitute ought to be found.

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

Colonel BROWNE: 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 is 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 BROWNE: 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-layer, and the two other employees, one of whom is in a certified 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 rail dispatch foreman; but an application by the same firm for a checker and loader 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 accountancy 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 BROWNE 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 valuer, a coal carman for Gas Company 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 to a grocer, 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 foreman was refused.