



*About 3,000 tons of fruit are consigned each year from Roxburgh's orchards.*

from the regulations about apples: "Apples of these grades (Extra Fancy, Fancy, and Good) shall be mature, sound, smooth, clean, well-formed, carefully hand-picked from tree, properly wrapped, true to name, free from disease, visible bitter pit, skin puncture, or skin broken at the stem, and other defects which cause fruit to decay or which are likely to make the fruit unattractive to the consumer. Individual apples of either grade shall carry not less than the percentage of colour and not more than the percentage of blemish and unnatural russet indicated on the appended list." For instance, Extra Fancy grade must have no more than one sting or bite, and Fancy and Good no more than two stings or bites.

"No," the boss answered, "we have no frost-fighting equipment; it will be one of the first things I'll have to do something about after the war." Several of the orchards in the district have fire-pots to fight the frost, and it was on these properties only that apricot crops were saved last season. Prices higher than ever before rewarded the enterprise of those orchardists who had the equipment. But it's not only enterprise: there are two sides of the matter to be considered. Each tree has to be surrounded by five fire-pots, each holding one gallon and a half of oil fuel; and in one night it is not unusual for the pots to be filled three

times. Pots and the fuel are costly; and, especially important these days, large gangs of men have to be available to tend the pots. Sometimes the pots have to be lighted many times in one season.

Fumes from the oil fuel are foul; buildings and animals suffer; and once in Roxburgh an invalid woman sleeping on a sun-porch nearly suffocated and had to be rushed to hospital in the middle of the night. Recently a hospital in the United States surrounded by orchards had to spend £400 cleaning from its buildings the filth caused by fumes from fire-pots; the authorities sued the fruit-growers, but it was ruled that the orchardists were doing no more than their livelihood demanded, and judgment was given for the defendants.

If smokeless oil could be used this method of frost-fighting would be much more successful. Some orchards overseas have installed systems of central heating, with piping led beneath the trees from a main furnace, but high cost is the great disadvantage. Better methods of frost-fighting, pre-cooling at the orchard so that fruit will reach the market in better condition, and carriage of fruit by aeroplane to the main centres, especially in the North Island, are some of the things the boss hopes will come soon after the war.

Light rain started to roll into the dust. Picking finished at once; the men came, buckets jangling, to hurry with the