

# Appendix A

Harold Rhenisch. "The Fruit Wars." *Out of the Interior: The Lost Country*, Vancouver: Cacanadada, 1993, pp. 109-110.

There was one thin, wormy, shepherd-cross of a bitch, too, and that was the worst, abandoned by two workers from Quebec, FLQ sympathisers, on the run from the RCMP.

My brother and I had been working sixty miles north that night, in Westbank, sorting and packing apples in the only storage that would rent us space. At midnight we loaded the fruit into the semi-trailer – under cover of darkness so the fruit police would not find us and confiscate the load. By that time, my father was doing his best to destroy the entire co-operative fruit-marketing system of British Columbia.

The system dated back to 1936, the result of an industry with its roots set as deep in real-estate fraud as in commerce and the possibilities of building a new country – the entire bottom of Okanagan Lake, between Summerland, Naramata, and Penticton, for instance, carved up into ten acre lots and sold sight unseen, to prairie people – as an escape from the cold. And the land wasn't cheap: in 1909, orchard lots in Keremeos sold for \$1,000 an acre at 9 percent interest, payable over three years – for orchards which themselves would not pay a return before 1919. Similarly, the irrigation systems, built hurriedly by the real estate companies, were so inadequate that in 1914 the B.C. government nearly went bankrupt paying to upgrade the systems in Oliver and Osoyoss. In short, it was industry in which thousands of inexperienced, heavily indebted orchardists were producing fruit wholly at the mercy of their buyers. Fruit unsold within a few days would be worthless, so the growers continually bid against each other and so

destroyed their prices. In the end, understandably, they begged the government to force everyone, including the independently owned packing houses into one large co-operative system. In this way they managed to safe-guard their industry for another thirty years. By the sixties however, the system had become old and stale. Many farmers were being forced out of business. With no accountability for quality and orientation to market forces, many farmers were being forced out of business. My father wanted to get paid for his fruit, and in his despair, with all legitimate channels closed to him, he chose to do it under cover of darkness.

We started home from Westbank at 2:30 a.m. At 4:30, we ran out of gas, so we started running. At 5:30 we finally stumbled home, walked past the dog in the last convulsions of strychnine poisoning, and into the house. Dad was waiting up for us, sleepless in his guilt. He ad left as at 2:30 the afternoon before. We wolfed down some bread and sausage, then went back outside to have a look at the dog but she was dead.