

*Home Canning*

greater. I suspect that more and more people, in a time of recession and economic downturn, particularly in the province I represent, will wish to economize and do their own canning at home. The area I represent is part of one of the great fruit producing areas of this country. I know my colleague for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Whittaker) is also concerned about this issue. I compliment him for the diligence with which he has pursued similar complaints which have been made to him, and for the number of times he has raised this question in the House in a variety of forms. If the needs of the local industry are to be met, it is necessary for the appropriate departments of the government, including the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and Agriculture to make certain there is no shortage of supplies next year.

Other aspects trouble me. The provincial government has made available garden allotments to people in urban areas. The idea has caught on. I suppose it is a natural development; these allotments have proved to be popular. People in urban areas are now growing their own produce and frequently they want to can any surplus. Senior citizens as well were asked to consider home canning as a means of stretching pensions which, especially in times of inflation, are inadequate. They are being urged to investigate this possibility for stretching their pension dollar. You can imagine the frustration of such people who, heeding the urgings of government departments, have tried, perhaps for the first time in many years, to can their own produce but have found it impossible to obtain the necessary canning supplies. The frustration of these people must be very great.

I am concerned about another aspect of the shortage and it is this: the absence of lids, for example, leads people in British Columbia to adopt the conspiracy theory. There seems to be no good reason why lids or jars should suddenly disappear. After all, they have always been available. They have always been taken for granted. People could always buy them. In looking for a reason for the shortage, it is easy to suggest that the large, commercial canning companies are somehow behind the shortage. That suggestion sounds more sinister than the suggestion that enough lids were not produced by the companies to meet demand.

There is a local glass plant in my area which had been producing jars with lids. It is not difficult to explain to people that no one can sell a jar without a lid and that manufacturers of jars try to obtain enough lids for their own output. But tell that to the person who already owns jars but does not have enough lids. A lady who phoned me had 800 jars, all of which she had filled during the previous summer with home grown produce, but she did not have lids in 1974. When she wanted lids, she found they were not available. Lacking lids for her 800 jars, she would have to buy another 800 jars which come equipped with lids. So you can see how this situation is hard to explain.

Some questions still remain in my mind. I realize that the parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Clermont) replied, during the adjournment debate of January 28, to the question asked earlier by the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary. I have read that reply rather carefully. However, I felt I

[Mr. Johnston.]

should still proceed with the motion I had placed on the order paper. Even having read the reply by the parliamentary secretary, I still have a few too many questions in my mind. I know the parliamentary secretary replied to the best of the information he had received from the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. However, I would like to know whether the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is satisfied with the situation at the present time. Can they assure the House that steps being taken will be adequate to the need of the coming summer?

• (1710)

Another question is whether the lids will fit the jars. From the answer given here, I am not sure from where British Columbia will be supplied next year. Will it be from the traditional source of American manufacturers who moved in when the central Canada producers abandoned the market, or will the supply for next summer come from Canadian manufacturers? If the supply were to come from the Canadian manufacturers, I would be concerned about whether the supply of lids would fit the jars available. It is not good enough to suggest, as some of the output from the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs suggested last summer, that the problem could be solved if the home canners in British Columbia changed their preference and settled for a jar with a narrow opening or a different size or shape than the one to which they are accustomed. I suspect that if they use a certain kind of jar it is because they have learned from experience that it best suits their purposes.

I am very curious about whether the supply which has been promised will fit the jars and whether it will be a supply of extra lids, not just a supply of new jars which are not needed. I say that because this industry had a recyclable product long before the term was even invented. Housewives reused the glass jars many times because they lasted a very long time. Along with the question of size is the question of quality. Disquieting questions were raised last summer as to the quality of the lids that were produced. When anyone did manage to talk a supplier into parting with a handful, the quality left a great deal to be desired. I hope the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs is working closely with the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce on this question.

Has the Canadian government, through the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce, made any inquiries of the Kerr Company and the Ball Company which have traditionally sold into western Canada from the United States? Have they actually tracked down the route of supply for western Canada, or are they hoping the lids will trickle in from central Canada? What will happen if the demand in central Canada again doubles or triples? What steps have been taken to allocate a supply to western Canada?

Something else raised a question last summer and as far as I can understand from my sources of information it will raise an even greater question in the coming year. Is it true that at the present time home freezers are unobtainable in western Canada? This has an important bearing on the problem. Some people who were denied the possibility of home canning last summer attempted to obtain home freezers. They found it difficult to obtain them. If someone