

Home Canning

ed. In Revelstoke, a shortage is expected and orders are filled slowly. So it goes, Mr. Speaker.

The parliamentary secretary stated that there appears to be an adequate supply in British Columbia. I suggest, with respect, that surveys taken in my constituency and in the constituency of Okanagan-Kootenay indicate the contrary.

The canning season is about to begin. Before it actually opens, I ask the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, and the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Jamieson), who I believe has some interest in this matter as well to make every effort to ensure that there is a sufficiency of these lids for canners in British Columbia particularly and for those in other areas as well. I am sure hon. members appreciate that because many people wish to do their own canning, prefer home-canned goods, and because of inflationary pressures, a great many additional people are taking up home canning, thereby making ends meet and stretching incomes. That is why we are making our request. The parliamentary secretary suggested that the government is fully conversant with the situation and that supplies are adequate. I say, with respect, that supplies are not adequate and that every effort must be made to ensure there is an adequate distribution of lids. Above all, adequate supplies should be available for meeting the needs of the new canning season.

Mr. Jack Pearsall (Coast Chilcotin): Mr. Speaker, I enter the debate this afternoon somewhat reluctantly.

Mr. Hnatyshyn: The hon. member is far too modest.

Mr. Pearsall: I have had considerable dealings with the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston) and have worked with him on many committees. I respect his position, regret I cannot go all the way with him, but say that I am prepared to support most of the things he said.

Mr. Friesen: That sounds like a true Liberal.

Mr. Pearsall: In response to the suggestion that the government should investigate the shortage of lids and jars used in home canning, the government has investigated these alleged shortages and will continue to do so. Today I wish to clarify one point raised by the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay: there is no shortage of canning jars. Let me make that clear.

Mr. Benjamin: Do you want to bet?

Mr. Pearsall: There is a shortage of lids. Perhaps the hon. member for Regina-Lake Centre (Mr. Benjamin) has run out of glass. Seriously, I say to that hon. member, and to the hon. member for Surrey-White Rock (Mr. Friesen), there is a shortage of lids, a shortage about which I shall talk. The past three years have witnessed a tremendous growth of consumer interest in home food preservation due to the rising costs of food products on retail shelves and the changing lifestyle of many Canadians who recognize the importance of our becoming a conserving society.

Mr. Speaker, this increase in home canning has resulted in unprecedented consumer demand throughout North America for canning jar lids. Since 1974, consumers in Canada, particularly in British Columbia, have encountered difficulties in obtaining adequate supplies to meet

[Mr. Patterson.]

their demands. The hon. member for Skeena (Mrs. Campagnolo) dealt with this matter when she spoke. Most members, particularly those from British Columbia, know of the special difficulties in obtaining wide-mouth lids of the kind generally used by most consumers in British Columbia. Compounding the problem has been hoarding and unnecessary panic buying of lids by consumers in anticipation of future need. This has been happening for about the last two years. I am sure most hon. members can tell this House of people who entered a store to buy wide-mouth lids and bought the entire stock of lids. This sort of thing has created tremendous difficulties. The shortage was created in part by panic buying.

The hon. member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Patterson) spoke of lids imported from Taiwan. I want to put on record some facts about those particular closure discs, as they are known, with the hope that these facts will become known to people across Canada. When we encountered shortages one year or so ago, some importers imported these discs from Taiwan. It became apparent after some discs were tested that when used in the conventional home canning process they failed to seal correctly. One particular disc imported from Taiwan, known as the Rosewood disc, was suspected of being faulty. This brand was distributed only by Safeway Limited in British Columbia. Sales of Rosewood discs had been stopped by Safeway themselves. The company is recalling these products from the market. I ask my colleagues from British Columbia, and others who are concerned, to please make sure that these discs are returned to Safeway. They are faulty and should not be used under any condition. Accordingly, arrangements have been made to obtain samples of all closure discs offered for sale in Canada. Testing is being performed in co-operation with the agriculture Canada-food advisory services.

It is recognized that faulty closure discs, particularly when used by home canners to preserve non-acidic vegetables such as carrots, beets and beans, present a real possibility of botulism poisoning. I wanted to bring that point up, Mr. Speaker, because I am sure all hon. members would wish to be aware of the canning products we turn out in British Columbia. The whole province grows a variety of fruits and vegetables, and home canning is one thing we all do.

● (1730)

Until this year, as has been mentioned previously, we have run into the problem of the tremendous growth of consumer interest in home food preservation. The special difficulty we have experienced, as I mentioned earlier, is in connection with the wide-mouth jar lids. Until this year there were only four companies supplying the Canadian market. They have been mentioned previously. There was the Anchor Cap and Closure company, Bernardin of Canada, and two American companies, Kerr Glass and Ball Corporation, both of which have been major suppliers, particularly to the British Columbia market. Figures provided by these four firms to the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs have shown significant annual production increases. But even the vastly increased supply in 1975 did not meet the consumer demand which continued to rise to unpredictable levels.