

Home Canning

supply, and I thank the hon. member opposite for bringing this particular problem to our attention.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Alex Patterson (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, I, too, would like to express my thanks to the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston) for bringing this matter before the House in the form of the motion that stands in his name. We will remember that this matter was raised on many occasions in the past year, but in spite of all the assurances we had to the contrary there are still shortages, and shortages are anticipated for the coming canning season.

The problem of severe shortages of wide-mouth Mason jar lids seems to be a continuing one, at least as far as western Canada is concerned. Every winter and spring for the past few years we have had members rising in the House asking the government to take measures to ensure an adequate supply of these materials for home canning purposes. Unfortunately, the result is usually the same. Members voice their concern about shortages and warn the government about the critical situation. The government responds by assuring the House that everything is under control, that manufacturers are stepping up production and there will be no shortages. Then summer comes, the canning season begins, and lids are nowhere to be found.

It is expected that we will face the same situation this year. On January 30 my colleague, the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay, asked the former minister of consumer and corporate affairs what steps the government was taking to monitor supplies for this summer in order to reassure consumers in British Columbia who wanted to can their own produce. In true form, the minister stated the same thing that we have been hearing for the last several years. As reported at page 10480 of *Hansard*, he said:

Mr. Speaker, the latest information I received from the officials of my department was that two Canadian manufacturers have increased their production of canning jar lids. On the other hand, I am informed that two American companies which supply more particularly the provinces of Alberta and British Columbia have also stepped up production. Moreover, one importer in British Columbia has already found on the foreign market canning jar lids which he intends to import to meet the demand during the current year.

The same assurance has been given to us today by the parliamentary secretary. Once again we have the record of the assurances of the government that there is not going to be any problem and there will be a supply for this coming season. The facts are that summer is here and there is once again a shortage of wide-mouth Mason jar lids, so that answers the minister's promises. I cannot help but wonder about the competence of the investigation allegedly carried out by the minister's officials in the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

I have already received some representation from my constituency about shortages, and we are only starting to get into the canning season in British Columbia. What will be the situation in two months' time? I have contacted a number of outlets in the major population centres of my constituency, and this is what I find, Mr. Speaker: three of the stores surveyed did not have any Mason jar lids and claimed they could not get them; three other stores claimed they had a limited supply or lids at the present time, but

only one of the three claimed that they were sure of future supplies.

This last store manager stated that he was unable to obtain the No. 3 size lids—the "gem" size that replaces glass lids for Mason jars. Another large store in my home town had the largest supply when I took the survey. The manager had 75 cases on hand, but he stated he had an unofficial limit of one case per month when ordering. The manager of a store in a small city in my constituency stated he had none in stock, and although he orders them every week, he rarely gets them. Sometimes he is able to get one case a month, but the supply is uncertain, to say the least.

I could give a list of other stores contacted, but in the majority of cases it was the same store. I compiled a list, and under the heading "Available stock" the note against the list of stores reads: none; good; none; very poor; fair supply; good; and none. Under the heading "Future possibility" are the notations: same problem as last year; poor prospect; good; poor; same as last year, poor; okay; looks all right; poor. That indicates the number of contacts I was able to make in my constituency.

The parliamentary secretary mentioned the problem of imported lids. One of those she referred to was apparently recalled according to a store in my constituency. I might say they were somewhat different. One shipment of lids came from Japan, but the other one came from Taiwan. At any rate, he was reluctant to purchase those lids because some had been found defective in that they would not seal properly. Some were sold. After tests had been run on them, it was decided to recall them. I got in touch with the manager of one of the stores, who said that it was not worth the risk to order these Metro lids, even though he could obtain as many as he wanted. That will show hon. members the difficulties with which we have been confronted in making inquiries about these lids.

● (1720)

On January 30, my colleague, the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay, also asked the minister about the inferior quality of some lids on the market at that time. Since the minister, in his reply to my colleague's first question, referred to the importation of lids, I wonder if the recently appointed Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Mackasey) has been able to acquaint himself with these matters; because, surely, defective Mason jar lids on the Canadian market give rise not only to the problem of food preservation but, as well, to the more important hazard of food poisoning which can occur when the seal breaks and bacteria spoils food.

Perhaps I might intimate the results of a survey recently conducted by my colleague from Okanagan-Kootenay in the north Okanagan. For example, in the city of Vernon a large supermarket reported that it had no lids at all in stock; they were on order, but there was no guarantee of shipment. A large supermarket in Salmon Arm reported that it had some Taiwan lids in stock, that a shortage of lids is expected, that no Canadian lids were available and that a standing order has been placed for them. In Armstrong, a few were available but the people there were not sure of future supplies. In Endersby, no shortage is expect-