

Home Canning

Mr. Paproski: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. I believe there has been agreement to deal with item No. 25, a motion standing in the name of the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston).

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): If that is agreed, we will resume debate on the motion of the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston).

* * *

AGRICULTURE**SUGGESTED GOVERNMENT INVESTIGATION OF SHORTAGE OF LIDS AND JARS USED IN HOME CANNING**

The House resumed consideration of the motion of Mr. Johnston:

That in the opinion of this House, the government should investigate the severe shortage of lids and jars used in home canning of fruits and vegetables and should instigate measures to ensure that a sufficient supply will be available to the Canadian market next year.

Mrs. Iona Campagnolo (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development): Mr. Speaker, the whims and rules of this House never cease to amaze me, for due to the length of this session the roulette-wheel of private members' bills has given the House the opportunity to debate once again the matter of canning lids. I see some hon. members smiling at the mention of canning lids, but I recognize that at least the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston) is not smiling.

It seems rather strange that something so small should be a matter of national attention. It is a national issue, and this House is indebted to the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay for putting forward his motion, thus allowing hon. members to discuss the difficulty of obtaining home canning lids and what this has meant to thousands of concerned people across the country who seek the thriftiness and good health of home-processed foods. The motion which the hon. member has placed before us is that an investigation be carried out into the access in this country to home canning lids.

● (1700)

It is a rather interesting thing that of all the various calls we hear from the opposition for investigations into this and that, this particular one has been investigated very thoroughly and it has been very well documented. The intervening year has been one in which we have been able to discern exactly what the situation is with regard to the purchase of can lids, where the access is and what the problem is with that accessibility. The shortage of jar lids for use in home canning in Canada occurred as a result of a shortage of tin plate used in the manufacture of these lids, and this was compounded by an unprecedented consumer demand. This was instigated by fear, almost hysteria, that there was not going to be a sufficient supply available. However, a great effort was made. The shortage existed throughout North America, and consumers in western Canada, particularly in British Columbia, had difficulty in obtaining proper supplies.

Special difficulty was encountered in obtaining wider-mouth Mason lids. This is the size which traditionally is used by consumers in British Columbia. Although consumer demand for lids has been difficult to predict precisely, this year's demand, for instance, is a very heavy one, and the continuing trend toward an increase in home canning requires that there be sufficient lids available to people in this country.

A close watch has been kept on the American situation since part of the Canadian supply of lids is manufactured in the U.S., and the office of consumer affairs in Washington, D.C., reports that the U.S. situation is similar to that in Canada. Both Anchor Cap and Closure and Bernadin, the two Canadian manufacturers of the product, have produced to absolutely maximum capacity due, in part, to efforts made on their behalf by the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce of this government. Furthermore, the former minister of consumer and corporate affairs took a very personal interest in this problem and made it possible for the two companies in Canada to receive incentive and encouragement to increase their production so that they could meet consumer demand. As a result of these contacts, the Canadian manufacturers installed additional machinery and personnel and were able, by working double and triple shifts on their production lines, finally to meet the public demand. Previous statements from these firms indicated that they would be able to meet consumer demand in western Canada as well as their traditional eastern markets. However, distribution was uneven and there were pockets of over supply in some parts of Canada, and in other areas shortages resulted.

In May of 1975, however, the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs began to receive conflicting information as to the availability of these supplies to distributors, retailers and consumers. In this connection, the department once again met with the two Canadian manufacturers a year ago to verify information which had been previously received on this situation. Both manufacturers produced to capacity, and these firms provided figures which indicated a substantial production increase over the previous year. In fact, the total supply for 1974 for Bernadin of Canada, for instance, was 17,087 cases which went to B.C. and in 1975 50,000 cases of Bernadin went to British Columbia. Anchor Cap and Closure, of Toronto, produced only 908 cases in 1974, and in 1975 there were 18,500 cases.

Mr. Paproski: Nothing in Alberta.

Mrs. Campagnolo: The hon. member for Edmonton Centre (Mr. Paproski) is very much interested in—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Turner): Order, please. The parliamentary secretary has the floor.

Mrs. Campagnolo: I know how great the interest of people in Alberta is in being thrifty and eating well, and I find the objections of the hon. member well taken. The people in Alberta can look forward to a major supply this year.

Mr. Paproski: Hear, hear! It is about time.