

can be obtained cheaper from the United States, this means Canadian businesses are put out of business and this means people are put out of work.

There are no suppliers of these lids in western Canada, and eastern Canadian suppliers could not compete with U.S. imports. They would dearly like to supply western Canada and increase their production, hire more Canadians, and expand their lines of manufacture, but since these products are cheaper to import from the United States their market was limited. A shortage of tin plate arose: What did the U.S. manufacturers do? They sold at home where they can make more money than by exporting to Canada. Although supplies were scarce in the United States, they were not as short as here. They looked after their own people, so the people in western Canada had to go without.

Two thousand dozen lids were sent from eastern Canada by the end of July, as a result of the letters I wrote and my involvement in the matter. Not only that, but some enterprising merchants from western Canada made arrangements in eastern Canada to have lids sent west. I visited a few stores that had lids for sale only because they were able to make a deal with a supplier in eastern Canada. They were used as "come ons" and the supply did not last very long. There was just not sufficient surplus in eastern Canada to meet our requirements.

The shortage still exists, Madam Speaker, which is why I raised this matter again early in December. If eastern manufacturers are to gear their production to supplying western Canada, their production must not be put in jeopardy if the United States suddenly finds it has a surplus of these lids and exports them to Canada at a cheaper price. This would completely disrupt the market again.

Another reason Eastern suppliers were not able to get further supplies of tin plate so they could supply western Canada was they were held to the average supply they had had for the last three years. They had not been supplying Western Canada for those three years. They obviously had no quota for Western Canada. In other words, these manufacturers needed additional supplies of tin plate, and this was the reason I contacted the various departments. Someone has to ensure that they get them. This is the responsibility of the Government. I was happy to hear the other evening the answer of the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Clermont) who said that something was going to be done to this end. Certainly action must be taken by a government department; we cannot leave it to the manufacturers or for someone to run all over the country in search of supplies.

Mr. Art Lee (Vancouver East): Madam Speaker, I rise to speak to this motion in the earnest hope that we can shed some light on this crisis. As indicated by the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston) as well as the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary (Mr. Whittaker), this was an extremely crucial matter during last summer. My colleague from Vancouver-Kingsway (Mrs. Holt) and I worked very hard to try to find some answer to this shortage of wide mouthed lids.

Home Canning

● (1740)

With all due respect I should like to go over briefly some of the matters raised by the hon. member for Okanagan Boundary. I think it is an interesting fact that wide-mouthed jars are very popular but are used more in western Canada than in eastern Canada. We have different growing seasons, and that is why there is a greater demand for these wide-mouthed jars in western Canada.

Having regard to the Kerr company, the sales representatives have said that they put their orders in a year in advance because these items are used for a seasonal product. When we spoke to many food brokers, manufacturers and wholesalers, we were told that it certainly looked like there was a conspiracy in that these companies were trying to create a shortage of supply in order to drive up the prices. The point is that when we confronted them, and suggested that it would appear to us that they were doing a terrible job of sales forecasting, we were told that they did not really expect such an increase in demand. This is the answer we were given, plus the other reasons mentioned by the two members from the Okanagan region.

Let me read into the record one letter I received at the time the hon. member for Vancouver-Kingsway and myself held our emergency meeting. This letter is from Martin, Robertson & Bain Ltd., food brokers, importers, exporters, and sales agents for Kerr Glass, one of the main manufacturers of wide-mouthed jar lids. The letter is dated August 30, 1974, and reads as follows:

On behalf of our principle, Kerr Glass Manufacturing Corporation, we submit the following regarding current shortage of home-canning caps and lids (commonly referred to as "fittings").

As far as Canada ins concerned, Kerr products are sold only in B.C. A very few cases of fittings find their way into Alberta—total of 41 cases in 1973; 30 cases this year.

Kerr sales in B.C. runs 80% to 85% in wide mouth sizes, which is the reverse to the U.S.A., where, with the exception of the Pacific coast states, sales are heavier to regular width jar openings.

Basically, the current shortage (which is mainly in wide mouth) is attributable to:

1. Shortage of tinplate—as acute as during World War II.
2. Wide mouth caps and lids need a heavier gauge tinplate than regular—the heavier gauge is not as readily available as regular gauge.
3. Tremendous resurgence to backyard gardens and home-canning—see attached article quoting the president of Burpee Seed. This resulted in all home-canner manufacturers running out of stocks before the 1973 season ended. Despite early sell-out, we had a record year in Kerr sales in B.C. in 1973.
4. Shortage at the end of last season left "pipelines" to be filled—at manufacturing, wholesale and retail levels. Despite increased shipments to date this year vs. total year 1973 (except wide mouth lids), shortages continue.

We regret we are unable to offer any real hope for the balance of this season. Subject to availability of tinplate, our principal expects to produce some fittings early in September, but these would not reach retail shelves until late September/early October.

Please be assured we are doing all possible to obtain supplies.

I think some doubt is left in the minds of hon. members as to whether they were doing everything possible. I would repeat that they put their orders in during the season for the next year's supply. At that point in time they were faced with a situation in which they could not go into production. Their orders were placed, they received their supply, and that was the end of it. It would