

was able to locate a dealer with a supply, he found that the paper or containers used for freezing were in short supply.

This added greatly to the suspicion that there was a conspiracy involved. To many people it looked like a deliberate attempt to make it impossible for the individual to lay up a supply of food in the traditional method of home canning or the more recent method of freezing. Along with answers to questions about shortage of lids for jars, I am very curious to know whether steps have been taken to ensure there will be an adequate supply of home freezers for the coming summer.

I realize in all of this that the price of sugar may be an inhibiting factor this year. However, with the price of that commodity now down somewhat, and with inflation still running wild in this country, I suspect that the urge to compensate for the high cost of living by canning some of the available surplus fruit and vegetables which are grown in the area I represent will produce another enormous demand for canning supplies. I realize that this matter affects more than just the Department of Industry, Trade and Commerce. Therefore, I would like assurance from government spokesmen for the various departments that this shortage will not recur in the summer of 1975.

Mrs. Simma Holt (Vancouver-Kingsway): Madam Speaker, I congratulate the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay (Mr. Johnston) on his motion. This has been a problem for not only all western members but all those who are concerned about the western community. I was aware of this problem before I entered parliament. I had received requests for help in my previous job.

I now have good news for this House. In a letter, I and my colleague the hon. member for Vancouver East (Mr. Lee), with whom I have been working, received notice from a B.C. distributor that points to the fact that there is accelerated action. In a newsletter to my constituents in Vancouver-Kingsway which I have just finished I state that there is good news for them, for the city of Vancouver and western Canada because Bernardin Canning Fittings have gone on double shift, Dominion Glass is increasing its activity, and Canada Steel has doubled its production in order to resolve the shortage of supplies for canning—a problem that was primarily western. We require a wide gauge lid of heavy steel. Last year there was an extremely serious situation. Like the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay, I also suspected there had been a deliberate shortage of production in order to raise prices.

The pattern of gouging in the marketplace seemed to have been set by the petroleum and oil producers. Exxon taught a lesson on how to create a shortage and profit by it. Consumer goods disappeared from the shelves for two or three weeks and then reappeared. Sugar, bread and cornmeal would disappear, then return. People would be glad to get them and would pay the increased prices. It was the pattern of the oil shortage: in the middle of a so-called energy crisis, Exxon announced a 300 per cent profit.

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Needless to say, when the lids disappeared everyone was suspicious, and I was very outspoken about it in public because my job was then in the public sphere. By the

Home Canning

behaviour of Exxon and the other oil producing companies and the methods of creating a shortage, I am afraid we set a frightening example for the Arab states and we are now trapped in the great tragedy of inflation, the petro-dollar control which now exists. And we probably will not ever be free of it until we find an energy substitute. I feel this, and it may seem like something of a digression but it is very much to the point and, I suspect, may be similar to the elusive canning lids. Despite all the excellent work being done by our leaders, I feel we may well become feathers in the storm of the petro-dollar domination. I am sure it is simpler to resolve the canning lid crisis in 1975.

I do hope that the information I have received from the people we contacted in the canning crisis last year is accurate and that it will affect the whole of Canada. What happened to me was almost identical to the experience of the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay during the election. But even before I was nominated, and after the election, people wanted help. I felt suspicious that somewhere in the United States there were warehouses full of these elusive canning lids and that one day the manufacturers would come out with new sizes of jars and new sizes of lids. This would mean that all those jars in basements across Canada would become obsolete, and I drew attention to this publicly.

I started a search and friends helped me through Canada, Japan, Hong Kong, Taiwan, through Germany, and I even went across the border myself to see if I could find a source of supply. I tried to see if I could find someone who would cast a die and flood the market. I was a dreamer, of course, because they said it took, at least a year to cast such a die. I even went to an inventor and a steelworker to see if they could create a lid to fit the topless jars—either in plastic or recycled tin. Then I thought that maybe we could go back to the glass tops and rubber rings and serve the public the old-fashioned but permanent type of device.

My colleague, the hon. member for Vancouver East then called a meeting last fall of the brokers in the business. It was held in my constituency office. I was rather nasty about my suspicion. In fact, I had just been on radio before we met, voicing my suspicions very loudly. As a result of that meeting, on January 28 I received a letter, which I am sure the hon. member for Vancouver East received, from a man by the name of W. W. Lynch, one of the people at that meeting, president of Perco Sales and Associates. It reads:

Re 1975 canning and pickling season.

The writer, knowing full well your very keen interest in the upcoming canning and pickling season in British Columbia, is most anxious to keep you informed of the corrective measures Perco Sales and Associates have taken to avoid the rather disastrous shortages of last year on Bernardin Canning fittings and to a lesser degree Dominion Glass preserving jars.

The attached documents are quite self-explanatory and are direct copies of the detailed presentations we have made to all major wholesale and/or chain operations in British Columbia and throughout western Canada.

The documents referred to advise the stores that the jars are coming in. Incidentally, at the time of the fall meeting I had written the Prime Minister (Mr. Trudeau)—it was about August or September—saying that the canning