

Since the federal government became aware of this problem a number of measures have been instigated with a view to alleviating and ultimately eliminating the shortage. I sympathize with the hon. member for Fraser Valley East (Mr. Patterson) in his concern. I want to go on to mention another thing which I think should be known. The Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has maintained liaison with its counterpart in the United States, the Office of Consumer Affairs in Washington, since a portion of the Canadian lid supply is manufactured in the U.S.A. and the shortage of lids in the United States has followed a similar pattern to that of Canada. The U.S. government reports that the supply for its country in 1976 will be more than four billion replacement lids; I repeat, more than four billion replacement lids.

I do not wish to place a lot of detail on the record, but I do feel that one or two facts should be brought to the attention of all hon. members here this afternoon. The availability of canning lids in 1976 will depend greatly on the continued output which I have just mentioned, and this is something which is fairly dependable. It will depend also upon the activities of the consumer public, something which we cannot forecast with a high degree of certainty. However, the federal government will continue to be actively involved as a watchdog over supplies of lids available to Canadian families who wish to protect themselves from the adverse effects of rising food prices by engaging in home canning.

I will take my seat at this point as I know there are other members who wish to contribute to this important discussion on home canning made possible this afternoon by the hon. member for Okanagan-Kootenay Boundary (Mr. Johnston).

Mr. Benno Friesen (Surrey-White Rock): Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for the opportunity to take part in this debate. I notice that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Lee) is not here and had graciously passed on his notes to the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (Mrs. Campagnolo). And I suppose they came originally from the deputy minister or one of his aides. That very effectively put the lid on the usual—

Some hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Knowles (Winnipeg North Centre): Another of those wide mouths.

Mr. Friesen: It put the lid on the usual gust or cacophonous images and twisted metaphors which come from that parliamentary secretary. But I must admit she is a good reader. She reads bureaucratic language very well. She doesn't even need stage direction. I appreciate all the statistics she left with us and the running account of the work of the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. But the situation is reminiscent of another, a few years ago, when there was an extreme shortage of jeans in the country. It was almost impossible to buy certain brands of jeans. Until the companies presumably felt justified in raising the price of jeans high enough to allow them to make a handsome profit, the shortage continued. This makes one suspect that the shortages experienced in sup-

Home Canning

plies of isolated commodities are contrived rather than real.

The hon. lady's speech was long on statistics but very short on answers. She did say there had been a shortage of tin plate—this is supposed to excuse the companies for failure to produce these jar lids. But she never explained the reason for that shortage. Could it be that there was a better profit to be made by the steel companies or the suppliers? Or could it be that a better profit could be made by manufacturing products other than jar lids? This was something the hon. lady did not explain. Maybe the deputy minister did not write that out for her.

Mr. Anderson: So you want us to interfere with the economy now?

Mr. Friesen: There are members on that side who would love to have a planned economy and, if this an example of it, Heaven forbid we should ever have an economy which is totally planned.

The parliamentary secretary told us that one of the companies was supplying lids but felt obliged to supply them first to the companies making jars so that all the jars would come complete with lids. That seems reasonable. But is the responsibility of the lid companies to the jar companies first, or is it to the consumers? There are thousands of Canadian consumers who have a good supply of jars but who are looking for lids. Yet that lid company felt its first obligation was to the other companies, those making jars. And it seems to me that the Department of Consumer Affairs is not arranging its priorities correctly.

Mr. Anderson: So you would advocate more government interference?

Mr. Friesen: Well, hon. members have heard that wonderful explosion coming from the hon. member for Comox-Alberni (Mr. Anderson) about government interference. I could give some wonderful examples of that, if he wants a catalogue.

Mr. Anderson: First you say we should do it, and then you say we should not. Make up your mind.

Mr. Friesen: That sounds like a Liberal. Looks like an old Edsel. You don't know which way it's going.

It seems to me that if there is no shortage, as the parliamentary secretary assures us is the situation, that the retailers know something the minister does not know about. I go to the local store and I see signs in the window—written on cardboard—"There is no shortage here of wide-mouthed Mason jar lids, now." Mr. Speaker, if there is no shortage, the consumer doesn't know about it, because the retailer has to advertise the fact.

I go out to Bells Corners and I see a 5-acre plot, subdivided into plots just a few square yards, and rented out to local home-owners. Then I go over to the area in which I live, I drive through Richmond and I see a 10-acre plot beside the freeway whose owner is doing the same thing—renting out small garden plots to home-owners. Practically every one of those plots has been rented out. It is evident that home-owners are trying to beat inflation, while at the same time enjoying home-grown products which they probably prefer.