

**The original documents are located in Box 1, folder “Canning Lid Shortage” of the
Norman Ross Files, 1974-75
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
The Assistant Secretary for Domestic
and International Business
Washington, D.C. 20230

OCT 11 1974

FYI-1/2

Honorable Marvin L. Esch
House of Representatives
Washington, D. C. 20515

Dear Mr. Esch:

President Ford has asked me to provide additional detail on the supply/demand imbalance on home canning lids reported in your letter of September 17.

Bureau of the Census "Current Industrial Report M34H" reports production of Home Canning Closures as follows:

Production of Home Canning Closures
Quantity (1,000 gross)

Year

1970	8,547,000
1971	11,533,000
1972	11,455,000
1973	7,967,000

Preliminary data suggests that the rate of production has risen more than 10 percent in 1974 over 1973, a low year. It is our understanding that when materials are available, manufacturers are working six days a week and three shifts a day in an effort to satisfy demand. Factory inventories stand at record lows. Industry informs us that all available home canning equipment has moved or is moving to retail stores. Despite this effort, sources within Government and industry agree that jar lids and caps will remain in short supply throughout 1974.

Demand for home canning materials has increased 170 percent due, in major part, to planting of around 6.5 million new family gardens in 1974. Supplies of tin plate, the basic raw material for jar lids and caps, continues tight primarily as a result of a substantial reduction in imports. Production of closures must compete for scarce tin plate with manufacture of other products. Although shipments of domestic tin plate are currently running approximately 9.8 percent above 1973 and manufacturers are scheduling further output increases for the balance of 1974, we do not expect any appreciable bettering of the supply situation for jar lids and caps this canning season.

10/17

For background information, we are enclosing a copy of the Department's Soda Ash Situation Report which contains useful production, import, export and net domestic availability information for this commodity. The domestic supply/demand imbalance on soda ash is currently restricting the production of glass, including bottles and jars. In our view, both soda ash and jars will remain in short supply throughout 1974.

The Department of Commerce has received many requests from individuals and companies for assistance in obtaining materials. The serious difficulties confronting producers and consumers in this and other short supply areas concern us greatly. However, the Department has no legal authority under which it may allocate materials to assist them except for defense purposes as provided by the Defense Production Act of 1950 as amended.

In respect to costs, since the Economic Stabilization Act expired on April 30, 1974 there is no general statutory authority to control prices in the various sectors of the economy. Although the Administration is continuing its efforts to increase awareness of the need to exercise restraint in further price adjustments, supply, demand and other market factors are currently determining price levels.

If you have need for any further information, please do not hesitate to call upon us.

Sincerely,

(Signed)

Samuel B. Sherwin
Deputy Assistant Secretary
for Domestic Commerce

cc: Mr. Norman E. Ross, Jr.
Assistant Director
Domestic Council
The White House



THE WHITE HOUSE OFFICE

REFERRAL

To: Honorable Frederick Dent
Secretary
Department of Commerce

Date: October 4, 1974

ACTION REQUESTED

- ☐ Draft reply for:
☐ President's signature.
☐ Undersigned's signature.
- ☐ Memorandum for use as enclosure to reply.
- ☒ Direct reply.
☒ Furnish information copy.
- ☐ Suitable acknowledgment or other appropriate handling.
- ☐ Furnish copy of reply, if any.
- ☐ For your information.
- ☐ For comment.

NOTE

Prompt action is essential.

If more than 72 hours' delay is encountered, please telephone the undersigned immediately, Code 1450.

Basic correspondence should be returned when draft reply, memorandum, or comment is requested.

REMARKS:

Please furnish information copy. Send to Norman E. Ross, Jr. Room 218, OEOB, Domestic Council, Telephone 456-6554

Description:

~~xxxxx~~ Letter: _____ Telegram: Other:

To: President Ford

From: Marvin L. Esch, Member of Congress

Date: September 17, 1974

Subject: Shortage of Home-Canning supplies for his constituents is becoming serious.

By direction of the President:

Norman E. Ross

Norman E. Ross, Jr.
Assistant Director
Domestic Council

142367



(Copy to remain with correspondence)

THE WHITE HOUSE

WASHINGTON

September 26, 1974

Norm

MEMORANDUM FOR MIKE DUVAL
FROM: WARREN HENDRIKS
SUBJECT: CANNING JAR AND LID SHORTAGE

Attached is a letter to the President from Congressman Esch regarding the severe shortage of canning lids and jars.

The letter is forwarded for your appropriate handling.

*draft for signature
KRC Mike*



September 25, 1974

Dear Marv:

I would like to acknowledge receipt and thank you for your September 17 letter to the President concerning the shortage of home-canning supplies for your constituents.

Apparently, the unanticipated number of home gardens and the demand for both jars and lids has created a very real shortage. I can certainly understand the frustration of the canners who wished to beat rising prices by preserving their own produce. You may be assured that your letter will be called to the prompt attention of the President and the appropriate members of the staff. I am certain the problem will receive careful attention.

With kindest regards,

Sincerely,

Max L. Friedersdorf
Deputy Assistant
to the President

The Honorable Marvin L. Esch
House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

bcc: w/incoming to Ken Cole for appropriate handling.
DRAFT REPLY if appropriate.

MLF:EF:VO:cjd



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MARVIN L. ESCH
REPRESENTATIVE IN CONGRESS
2ND DISTRICT, MICHIGAN

COMMITTEES:
EDUCATION AND LABOR
SCIENCE AND ASTRONAUTICS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

September 17, 1974

4-19
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LIVONIA, MICHIGAN 48154
PHONE: 313-261-6080

The Hon. Gerald R. Ford
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D. C.

BT
Dear Mr. President:

During a recent trip to the Second Congressional District I learned from many constituents of the serious shortage of reusable jar lids used primarily for the canning of home grown foods. This shortage -- and the cost which has doubled from a year ago when the lids were readily available -- has been mentioned by residents of the Second District at open office hours I hold regularly and in a survey of supermarket pricing being undertaken by many residents of the District.

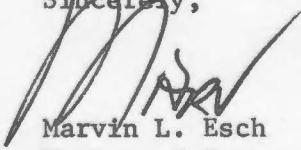
Due to my great concern about this matter, I have written Lewis Engman, Chairman of the Federal Trade Commission, to request a thorough and expeditious study to determine whether there have been any violations for which the consumer is being unfairly penalized. It may be the shortage of canning lids and jars is a result of a shortage of raw materials or production capacity. I have no evidence of restraint of trade being practiced by manufacturers, but certainly it would be helpful if the government with encouragement from the White House would undertake a probe to determine if there have been unfair practices.

The inability to purchase canning lids is especially discouraging to home canners who had hoped to offset the high cost of vegetables and fruits. Many are now faced with the prospect of seeing their produce rot in backyard gardens because of the lack of proper canning materials. Obviously this is an absurd situation when the government has been encouraging the use of backyard gardens as a means of cutting food costs and inflation.

Enclosed is an article from the September 10 Detroit News which described the frustration of many home canners. Not only must these consumers wait in long lines to purchase jar lids, they must also pay a price that is more than double last year's 40-cent-a-dozen average cost for lids.

Any help you can provide in coordinating a study of this situation will be greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,


Marvin L. Esch
Member of Congress

The lid's off!

He corners market on scarce canning jar covers

By MICHAEL WOVK
News Staff Writer

It has been next to impossible recently to purchase the lids in Michigan at any price

were easily available. But Joseph said he believes he has the only supply of them now in

