Defense Drafts Aluminium

S. J. Swensson

Iowa State College

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Defense Drafts

Aluminum

S. J. Swensson, secretary, Aluminum Wares Association, tells of the industry and defense

"Defense first" is the slogan of the aluminum cooking utensil industry as well as other housewares fields. The present temporary curtailment of utensil manufacturing for civilian purpose should soon be offset by the large increase in aluminum ingot production now coming in. The present metal shortage is due to the needs of defense purposes.

Aluminum cooking utensil manufacturers, now engaged in national defense orders, are only partially equipped to handle high strength aluminum alloys required for major defense uses. They are necessarily maintaining their plants for expansion in domestic manufacture as soon as the temporary metal shortage is over.

These manufacturers represent only one of many industries affected by the recent rapid growth of the use of aluminum for national defense purposes. Within the past few months this has resulted in reductions of aluminum ingot and sheet shipments to cooking utensil plants and these other companies.

It is well known that many civilian users of aluminum for everything from streamlined trains to bottle caps and toothpaste tubes temporarily are urged by government agencies and the aluminum industry to use substitute materials so that more aluminum may go to the fighting aircraft and other armaments.

Household wares have not been affected so seriously in proportion because of the smaller tonnage involved. Even though showing a steady sales growth over the past 10 years, cooking utensils represent a declining percentage of the total aluminum produced. This probably has been under four percent in recent months.

As defense requirements for aluminum have increased, so have aluminum production facilities, which this year will probably exceed the production of 1939 by 200 million pounds of aluminum ingot. Production estimates for 1942 are in excess of this year's total by nearly 300 million pounds. This means that 1941, because defense requirements are now in high gear, will find temporary shortages in the plants of every civilian aluminum user.

Aluminum cooking utensil manufacturers are now supplying regular line items by reducing their warehouse inventories. This will be continued for some time, supplemented by limited new manufacturing from reduced supplies of metal through a voluntary producers' rationing system.

The attitude of aluminum utensil manufacturers is of the fullest cooperation with the government and the producers of aluminum. All are conscious of defense metal needs and many are devoting a large percentage of their plant facilities to the production of defense materials, including cooking utensils for the military and naval establishments.

However, as the National Defense Advisory Commission recently pointed out, fabricators in the utensil
industry "cannot turn out the sheets required for airplanes." This means that the aluminum cooking utensil manufacturers are assuming their share of the preparedness program but are maintaining their production machinery ready to expand it in the manufacture of cooking utensils for civilian use just the minute the temporary shortage of metal is over.

While it has been learned by the Defense Commission and aluminum industry research that temporary substitutes can be found for aluminum in many of its broad non-defense uses, it is not so easily substituted in the utensil field.

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