

• (3:30 p.m.)

On that understanding we are satisfied for the present that this bill is not to be killed, and when parliament reassembles we shall be urging that it be one of the first items called so that this parliament can take a step toward reducing the price of prescription drugs to the consumers of Canada. We do not suggest for a moment that these amendments to the Patent Act and the Trade Marks Act are going to solve all the problems in the drug industry, but we do feel that the work of the committee following two years of investigation does count for something. We also feel that the investigation conducted by the combines investigation branch and by the Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs counts for something. This valuable work ought not to be allowed to go down the drain. If this legislation offers any hope at all that we can do something about the price of drugs, that we can do anything at all to make it easier for those people who must buy drugs in fairly large quantities, then parliament ought not to shirk its responsibility in this regard. We therefore accept the Prime Minister's commitment and when we reassemble we shall expect the government to carry out that commitment.

Mr. Rynard: I listened with interest to the hon. member for Burnaby-Coquitlam and I am sure we all agree that we need the cheapest drugs possible for those who are sick. But those drugs must be safe. It is no use getting cheap drugs which might poison someone, and that matter requires looking into.

I also wish to clear up another misunderstanding. In today's *Globe and Mail* Mr. Michael Gillan, writing about the government's move to win a house recess, said that the government was opposed to proceeding with the drug bill because Conservatives have indicated they would conduct a lengthy debate on estimates to block the way to consideration of the drug bill. I want to say that that is completely false and erroneous.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear.

Mr. McCleave: The *Globe and Mail*, please note.

Mr. Rynard: At no time did the Conservative party consider blocking this bill by conducting a lengthy debate on estimates.

An hon. Member: That was N.D.P. nonsense.

Supply—Consumer and Corporate Affairs

Mr. Rynard: When the government proceeds with the bill we shall be prepared to deal with it clause by clause, and I want that on the record.

I now wish to deal with another matter. We often talk about protecting the consuming public, but we do not often say anything about protecting one government from another. In the federal house, here in Ottawa, we often say that we shall share programs. When we share those programs we most often share them with provinces, and the provinces are called on to share in the costs of programs. Sometimes they pay more than their share. Sometimes the share we ask them to pay is beyond their financial ability. In my opinion when we apply such pressures we are doing something that, in my judgment, constitutes political blackmail.

When provinces are asked to share in a program everybody forgets that provincial governments must pay for the administration of those programs in the provinces. This is true of the medicare program. The federal government is to share the cost of the program with the provinces, but the provinces will pay for the administration. As I say, we must remember sometimes that one level of government needs to be protected from another. Ontario, my province, is budgeting for under \$300 million deficit, and the federal deficit at Ottawa will be about \$800 million. If this situation exists right across the country it shows that our financial condition is not good. We must have priorities and we must stop blackmailing the provinces and the public into accepting and paying for programs they do not necessarily need, and which may be wrong in principle.

I also want to ask what the government will do in order to provide doctors to operate the medicare scheme? If we do not provide doctors for the public, are we not cheating the public? If we are not cheating now, then I have never seen cheating anywhere. Our people will have to pay their medicare premiums but there will not be the doctors to take care of them in Canada. My hon. friend from Sudbury brought this point to the attention of the house the other day, when he spoke about the scarcity of general practitioners. I ask what the government will do to alleviate the shortage. Being 2,000 doctors short of our requirements, we are in the throes of a major medical crisis. Some areas of Canada have no doctors at all, yet we are talking about universal medicare. Anyone going to a strange