

Patent Act

Mr. John Zabriski, President of Merck Frosst Canada Inc. as follows:

The expansion is dependent on Bill C-22. We made that perfectly clear when we announced the research plans. We won't go ahead until the Bill is passed.

There it is, Mr. Speaker. That is the guarantee that drug makers are demanding and their friends in the Government have guaranteed to get for them. Will they give a return guarantee? Will that be written into the same law? No, Sir, not when it is done by the present Government, even though the Senate would have asked for it.

This is typical of the morality of the Government that we have now. It will do everything to legitimize the power and the wealth of the largest corporations and will use whatever force or law is considered necessary to limit the power and the income of people who have to earn their living by working for others, whether it be the railway workers, the postal workers, the grain handlers or whoever.

What we have is a very clear example of the power of the great corporations in this country. I think it is very unfortunate that the Government is so adamant. There was, according to rumours in the press, some consideration of a possible compromise. Apparently the Government not only has friends in the multinational corporations and the multinational friends in the Government, but there is one other even bigger ally behind them, namely the Government of the United States. There has been a long standing agreement between the Prime Minister of Canada (Mr. Mulroney) and the President of the United States to put through Bill C-22 without amendment. That was rumoured, suggested and hinted at over the past year during the debate. It was always furiously denied by whatever Minister was answering questions, including the Prime Minister. No, no, no, a thousand times no. The Tories would not think of making the drug Bill part of the free trade deal. But it was.

● (1630)

That came out a month ago at the time the free trade deal was being shown to the press. There was a hurried change and people were asked to give back their copies of the press release. Most of them gave it back. One journalist said there was one copy that was not given back, so we have a clear comparison between the first version that includes the drug patent Bill as part of free trade and the second version which has the page reprinted with that paragraph missing.

The combined power of the multinational corporations and the Government of the United States has insisted that this Bill go through Parliament unchanged. It is fairly clear, as the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) said, that one of the reasons for that is that these same multinational drug companies charge much higher prices in the United States, but Americans can read, Americans can travel and Americans can learn that the same drugs are cheaper in Canada. In fact, this is one cause of the difference in health costs.

The per capita cost of health is higher in the United States than it is in Canada, even though medical records show that the rates of mortality and morbidity are lower in Canada than in the United States. With less money per capita, we get better health care in Canada than Americans get in the United States. Part of the reason for that is the extortionate price of prescription drugs, freely charged by these same corporations in the United States.

Even though Canada comprises only 10 per cent of the industry's market, its population being only one tenth the size of the population of the United States, the corporations find the situation in Canada to be a dangerous example. Because Canadians have found it possible for some years to provide necessary drugs at lower prices, there is a danger that the people of the United States might demand the same thing. Therefore, the corporations have to force Canada to take this legislative step that will force the price of drugs up for Canadians and protect the profits of the multinationals not only in Canada but also in the United States.

It is a sad day when this Government lines itself up against the people of Canada, represented by thousands of seniors, against the medical experts of Canada, against the provincial Governments of Canada and against the Senate of Canada and lines itself up with the multinational drug corporations whose head offices are elsewhere, and with the President of the United States. It shows clearly the principle of "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also". That is where the Government's treasure is, with the wealthy.

Mr. Manly: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Hon. Member for Spadina (Mr. Heap) for the way in which he outlined the situation. A Montreal *Gazette* article of August 20 of this year refers to a letter the U.S. consumer advocate, Ralph Nader, wrote to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney). According to the article, Mr. Nader said:

—your Government is close to making a very serious mistake by choosing corporate wealth over the Canadian public's health and welfare.

In response to that, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) told the Commons on August 19, according to the same article:

"What Mr. Nader fails to realize is, this is Canada not the U.S. We have medicare. We have a social safety net. We have 85 per cent of our population covered by drug plans, and virtually 100 per cent of our senior citizens. No one on welfare goes without drugs in this country."

What effect will Bill C-22 have on this great distinction that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has described? What effect will the Bill have on our medicare plan and on pharma-care programs in different provinces and what effect will it have on individual consumers who are not able to take advantage of those pharma-care programs?

Mr. Heap: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for drawing that letter to my attention and for reminding me of Ralph Nader's intervention. It is comical that the Government, which likes to buddy up to the Government of the United States, likes also to scorn one of the most intelligent and