

*Patent Act—Trade Marks Act***GOVERNMENT ORDERS****PATENT ACT—TRADE MARKS ACT****EXTENSION OF AUTHORITY TO GRANT
LICENCES**

The house resumed from Thursday, January 16, consideration of the motion of Mr. Basford for the second reading and reference to the standing committee on health, welfare and social affairs of Bill No. C-102, to amend the Patent Act, the Trade Marks Act and the Food and Drugs Act.

[Translation]

Mr. André Fortin (Lotbinière): Mr. Speaker, last night at the time of adjournment, I was dealing with bill No. C-102 entitled an act to amend the Patent Act, the Trade Marks Act and the Food and Drugs Act.

Among other things, I quoted a statement made by the former minister of finance (Mr. Sharp) in which he commented on the efficiency of two bills designed to lower the cost of drugs. In fact, the first abolished the sales tax on drugs and the second reduced from 20 to 15 per cent the custom duties on drugs, apart from curtailing tremendously the dumping duties on the imports of some drugs.

Since the coming into force of these measures, several months ago, we have noticed—

Mr. Speaker: Order. Does the honourable minister wish to rise on a point of order?

[English]

Hon. Ron Basford (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, would the hon. member permit a question. Would he allow me to ask him for the precise reference to the statement that was made by the former minister of finance, the hon. member for Eglinton (Mr. Sharp), so that I can look it up?

[Translation]

Mr. Fortin: Mr. Speaker, I have the exact reference in my office. In any event, I can have it photostatted and copy of it sent to the minister after my speech, which will amount to the same thing.

I said that the federal government had adopted two measures with the view to reducing the cost of drugs. Now, what are the results? The cost of drugs has not gone down. Of course, it has for wholesalers and retailers, but not for the consumer.

The cost of drugs is still outrageous, prohibitive and unacceptable. Retail prices for drugs in Canada run \$2 to \$13 higher than

[Mr. Hellyer.]

in the United States and in Europe. Canadians pay too much, Mr. Speaker, for the drugs they need. Everyone recognizes that, including the minister whom I wish to congratulate for being a realist.

• (11:40 a.m.)

What is the cause of this situation? It will be no news for anyone that drugs, with regard to their discovery, their brand names and their sale, represent a tremendous and almost sacred monopoly, which makes a handful of specialized people richer and which is detrimental to most Canadian people who have to use some drug or other as a cure. That monopoly, in my opinion, comes from the exclusive privilege provided for 17 years by a brand name.

Mr. Speaker, the patent could be considered as a reward to the inventors, in the form of a temporary monopoly but it is too long, in my opinion, as a reward for the service they render to society by making their discovery known. Furthermore, the attraction of that monopoly, because of its related material advantages, tends to strongly stimulate the creative mind and to protect the inventor.

Under legislation in force in almost every country of the world and according to agreements to which these countries adhere, a discoverer can, for a certain period of time, through patents, keep the exclusive property of his discovery, that is to say, he will benefit from a privilege which allows him to prevent other individuals or legal entities to make and even to use the object of those patents. Therefore, a monopoly is established which serves quite well the interests of the inventors and distributors but not those of the consumers.

Therefore, I welcome this bill, at least the part dealing with the restriction of that monopoly, since we are then in favour of private enterprise in Canada and we protect the consumer. Although technical advances allow of great hopes, this progress in some way depends, in every country, on the purchasing power. Furthermore, it directly contributes to an increase in the living standard and so, in quality. However, an improvement in the quality of life or standard of living triggers inevitably an increase in the cost of living. Whether we admit it or not, Mr. Speaker, we come back to the problem of prime importance, that is, the purchasing power which is in the pockets of the consumer or the taxpayer.