

Statements by Ministers

companies themselves would have agreed. After his study, Dr. Eastman recommended a four-year period, and now, the Conservative Government has come up with a ten-year period, which we find quite excessive.

Finally, we had talked about a more or less selective protection against compulsory licensing. For instance, we were saying that the companies which promised to achieve a specific performance and to respect certain principles in setting their prices could be protected against import licenses, but if they did not respect their commitments, they would lose this protection for one or more drug for which they hold the patent. I find that the three solutions which we had proposed were examined very lightly by this Government, and rather than negotiating a proposal which would be acceptable to the pharmaceutical companies, the provinces, which are the major purchasers of drugs, and the consumers, the Government is now proposing a solution which is exclusively to the advantage of the large multinationals, and I find this quite regrettable.

● (1520)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Questions and comments are now terminated.

I believe that there have been discussions among House Leaders, and agreement to revert to Statements by Ministers.

Mr. Mazankowski: Mr. Speaker, may I seek unanimous consent of the House for the purpose of allowing the Hon. Minister of Employment and Immigration (Mr. Bouchard) to make a statement, which I understand the opposition Parties are expecting at this particular time, further to an undertaking that the Minister made in the House yesterday?

Mr. Riis: It is our intention to co-operate with the Government to facilitate the Minister delivering his statement. I wish to indicate that there was an appropriate time for statements earlier in the day. If my memory serves me correctly, it was a government decision to jump that period into Government Orders of the Day. In an effort to co-operate and facilitate the business of the House, we would be pleased to hear the Minister now.

Mr. MacLellan: We are agreed and look forward very much to the Minister's statement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is it also agreed that the time will not be added to this evening's sitting?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

CHANGES RESPECTING PENSION INCOMES—STATEMENT BY MINISTER

Hon. Benoît Bouchard (Minister of Employment and Immigration): Mr. Speaker, as promised on Wednesday, December 3, I am pleased to announce today that the unemployment insurance rules dealing with pension earnings will be changed. These changes will allow workers who take other employment after their retirement and then work long enough to requalify for unemployment insurance benefits to receive those benefits without any deduction of previous pension income.

[English]

This change will put more than \$230 million of unemployment insurance funds back in the pockets of the people affected.

On November 8, 1984, in the agenda for economic renewal the Minister of Finance (Mr. Wilson) announced the Government's intention to treat pension income as earnings for the purpose of determination of unemployment insurance benefits. We were guided by the principle that persons who have retired should not look to the unemployment insurance fund as a supplementary source of income. It is designed to provide wage replacement to those who are temporarily out of work.

The important change in policy announced in November, 1984, did not adequately distinguish between those who had retired and left the labour market, and those who had retired to begin subsequent careers. Military and RCMP personnel who are required to retire earlier in life best illustrate the point.

The changes announced today will ensure that this group is treated fairly and equitably as active members of the labour force.

[Translation]

Workers who have started subsequent careers and contribute to unemployment insurance and subsequently become unemployed will be entitled to full unemployment insurance benefits based on their post retirement employment income, regardless of their previous pension income.

Mr. Speaker, there is one additional issue which I would like to deal with today. Some retirees who were receiving benefits on January 5, 1986 when the former policy came into effect were disqualified and because they had left the labour market will not be able to requalify.

Notwithstanding the fact that Ministers made repeated announcements of the policy change in the November 1984 Economic Statement and subsequently, some of these people allege that they made their retirement decisions on the basis of inaccurate information from federal government sources.