

*Government Orders*

• (1240)

At that time an amendment was passed to the Patent Act which limited the patent monopoly of these foreign monopolies and limited the application in Canada to five years. After that an entrepreneur in Canada could establish a manufacturing corporation, apply for a licence from the multinational monopolies and by law get that licence.

By paying a fee to the multinational corporations, the entrepreneur in Canada could produce what we call generic drugs. Sulpha is sulpha no matter what company produces it. Penicillin is penicillin no matter what company produces it. That was the basis of the generic drug industry which has grown and produced a good many jobs in Canada. More importantly, it has lowered the price we would otherwise be paying for these prescription drugs.

The government's own office in 1983 estimated the generic drug industry had saved Canadians \$200 million on the prices of drugs in the previous year. It is done very simply. The government's commission estimated when one generic drug company competes, the price the monopolies can charge becomes 20 per cent cheaper because of the competition. When five companies compete the prices average 45 per cent cheaper. When 10 versions of a generic drug compete, the prices average 70 per cent cheaper. That is not surprising considering some of the foreign multinational corporations make 100 per cent profit every year on their investment. They can well afford to let some of that go for a necessity and this is a necessity.

The health of Canadians is far more important as an obligation to this government than the super profits of a foreign multinational, even when the foreign multinational promises to make jobs. We know the record of those companies in the last four years has been the destruction of jobs in Canada, not just in the drug industry but in all kinds of manufacturing. They have destroyed hundreds of thousands of jobs in Canada because they find it cheaper to produce in places like Mexico where they can hold people down to \$1 to \$2 per hour wages.

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The amendments to the Patent Act brought their monopoly time in Canada down to five years, but the

multinationals have now campaigned to get those unlimited profits back. First they pressured this government to extend the monopoly power by the 1986 law to 10 years. That is 10 years before anybody can compete with them in Canada by producing basically the same drug under a generic title. They are now demanding 20 years of monopoly time and this government is giving it to them through its majority vote.

I want to repeat, the question basically at issue is what is fair, not just between individuals or nations, but to the whole nation. The Canadian health system developed from small beginnings to a national system that is the envy of many people in the world including more and more people in the United States of America, and I will come back to that.

Part of that envious system is the moderate price of prescription drugs which Canadian law so far has enforced; enforced not by price fixing, but by allowing competition which this government claims to admire.

The people of Canada have a moral right and a moral obligation to do this through their government and through their representatives in this House to allow that competition to keep the prices down so that they are reasonably possible for Canadians to pay, including poor people, including seniors who need more and more drugs as they grow older and including children whose lives can be stopped suddenly when they have need of these drugs.

When drugs can cost as much as \$19 per pill, the companies that force such a high price are killing people for a profit. They do not need a gun to do it. They do not necessarily have to do it by industrial carelessness like the accident in Bhopal, India a few years ago, when they killed thousands of their neighbours by a careless explosion. They do it by putting the prices beyond the reach of the people.

I am glad that some American brothers and sisters have come up to Canada, not just now but through the years, to let us know what is going on in the United States with this prescription drug racket. I am glad that they and we are making common cause now because they have to pay 62 per cent more than we do on average for prescription drugs. They know what these multinational corporations cost because it is primarily from them that the multinational corporations are making those 100 per cent profits.