

Patent Act—Trade Marks Act

It is useful at this time to refer again to the special committee of the House of Commons which studied this matter and which stated it hoped provincial governments and provincial pharmaceutical associations would take whatever steps are necessary in the light of changing circumstances to ensure that sufficient competition can be engendered in the retail drug business to lower prescription drug prices. I hope that all the provinces will take whatever action is necessary to lower the cost of drugs.

I am delighted to note that my province, Ontario, has already taken the initiative in this matter. The Speech from the Throne announced a program in February, 1968, which will establish a negotiated price at which not only hospitals but retail pharmacies will be able to purchase prescription drugs. The drugs and biologicals under consideration account for 85 per cent to 90 per cent of the cost of prescribed drugs to hospitals and consumers.

A statement from the Ontario health department indicated that discussions with pharmaceutical firms, wholesale distributors and retailers will be held in an attempt to reach a consensus on certain principles. A negotiated price will be established for drugs and biologicals purchased in bulk. Added to the bulk price will be a reasonable price for packaging and distribution. Hospitals will be provided with a price list of these drugs, and by purchasing at the negotiated price they will reduce their operating costs.

In the Ontario plan the retail pharmacies will also be able to purchase at this negotiated price and, being allowed a modest mark-up, would sell the drugs at the final price plus a dispensing fee. Apparently the Ontario Department of Health has had good co-operation in its efforts so far to determine what drugs should first be considered in this program and what method of distribution should be adopted so that substantial economies may be achieved. It is my hope that the other provinces will tackle this problem as soon as possible so that all Canadians may enjoy the full benefit of the efforts of their governments, federal and provincial, to lower the cost of drugs.

I should like to refer for a few moments to the speech made last Friday by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Health and Welfare. He explained to us at some length what additional resources have been made available to the food and drug directorate to protect the safety and efficacy

of generic drugs and to provide for inspection of imported generic drugs. I do not want to take up the time of this house as this speech can be read in *Hansard*, but I should like to state that we should be assured of the safety of generic drugs. Even Canadian university teaching hospitals are prescribing generic drugs for their patients. I am satisfied that the Food and Drug Directorate is doing everything it can to ensure the efficacy and safety of drugs in this country.

• (4:20 p.m.)

We in this House of Commons have a duty to see that the burden of the cost of illness is reduced. The legislation before us today in Bill C-102 will, I am sure, have a significant impact in reducing the cost of drugs in Canada without jeopardizing in any way the quality of the drugs offered to the public.

Our responsibility to the people of Canada is to promptly pass this bill as the law of our country. Bill C-102 is a clear indication of the government's determination to work toward a just society in Canada, a society which will seek to eliminate the social ills which disfigure the existence and impair the quality of human life for too many of our citizens. I therefore urge the members of the House of Commons and the members of the Standing Committee on Health, Welfare and Social Affairs to expedite the study of this bill and to enact it into law as promptly as possible.

Mr. John Gilbert (Broadview): Mr. Speaker, we have two champions in Canada today. We have ski champion Nancy Greene and we have Canada's shadow-boxing champion in the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Basford). He seems to shadow-box on the question of consumer prices; he shadow-boxes on the question of the Combines Investigation Act and restrictive practices; he shadow-boxes on hockey; he shadow-boxes on advertising by companies in Canada, and now he is shadow-boxing in the field of drugs. This is why I call him Canada's shadow-boxing champion.

I have read the minister's speech of October 17 introducing this bill. Toward the end of the speech he apologized for making a lengthy speech and said:

May I thank hon. members, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to go on for a few minutes after ten o'clock, and I apologize to them for this lengthy resumé of the principle of this bill and the reasons which lie beneath its introduction. However the debate under the original Bill C-190 was so lengthy and inspired that I considered I