

Adjournment Debate

testimony of witnesses from other countries, namely, the United States.

The rationale for seeking the testimony of individuals in the United States has been very clear as a result of the Government's stated intentions with regard to trade and a number of other matters. It ought to be remembered that, with regard to Bill C-22 and the amendments thereto, the Government in the pharmaceutical Act itself is trying to change the Canadian system to make it more in line with that of the United States. Therefore, members of my Party as well as the New Democratic Party supported the motion to seek out the views of individuals in the United States who are familiar with that system, because those of us in Canada, namely, the Government of the day, were trying to move toward that system.

Unfortunately, the government members on that committee refused to hear individuals such as the chairman of the generic pharmaceutical industry in the United States in the person of Mr. William Haddad, a former special adviser to the former President of the United States, John F. Kennedy. They refused to hear the testimony of senior citizens' groups and organizations in the United States who have been fighting and waging a battle to change the American law and to adopt the Canadian law. They believe this law to be in the best interests not only of consumers, but indeed of all people in the United States.

The system that we have here in Canada we, in the Liberal Party, believe very strongly is in the best interest of all Canadians. It underlines the concerns that I have had for quite some time with regard to Bill C-22. The effects of Bill C-22 have been demonstrated by numerous witnesses. To highlight a few, they are: the Royal Canadian Legion; the United Church of Canada; Provincial Nurses' Association of Prince Edward Island; the Health Coalition in my own constituency of Cape Breton—East Richmond; and provincial Governments in Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta, and other provinces. They have all expressed real concerns about the devastating effects that could arise as a result of Bill C-22 passing this House without amendments as put forward by myself, or indeed by the Senate of Canada.

In this short intervention that I make I must remind Hon. Members that prices to Canadian consumers for pharmaceutical drugs will rise dramatically. The Government contends that the Prices Review Board will be of some assistance in controlling those prices. It is not set up to control prices. It is only set up to review something after it takes place. Its authority, both in terms of statute and in terms of precedent under the law, is, to say the least, extremely weak. In fact, constitutional experts have suggested in writing and in public that the Bill itself as it relates to the Prices Review Board is unconstitutional.

• (1805)

The contention made by government Members, particularly the Minister, that the passage of Bill C-22 without amendment will create thousands of new jobs and increased expenditures in

research and development has not been proven. Nor have the arguments been sustained by concrete and specific evidence; quite the contrary. I hope the Government will respond in a much more positive and much more reasonable and objective manner.

The New Democratic Party opposed outright any amendment to Bill C-22. We, as the Liberal Party, have stated very clearly that the pharmaceutical Act needs reform. I moved some 40-odd amendments to that Bill, much in line with the recommendations of Dr. Eastman, an authority recognized by the three political Parties in this Chamber.

Those recommendations were supported, I believe as early as a couple of weeks ago, in the form of a signed petition asking the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) to reform the pharmaceutical Act in line with the recommendations of Dr. Eastman, which have been the recommendations of the Liberal Party since day one.

I hope I will hear from the very distinguished Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mrs. Bertrand) some positive news from the Government on a very important subject matter.

[Translation]

Mrs. Gabrielle Bertrand (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-22 was designed by Canadians for Canadians. This legislation will result in tremendous benefits for all Canadians, such as improved health care, heightened research and development activity and greater employment opportunities, to name but a few.

All this will be achieved with the guarantee of reasonably priced drugs for Canadian consumers. Nothing in this Bill runs counter to the interests of Canadians.

A Bill that so closely impacts on the most elemental aspects of the lives of Canadians must be discussed and weighed by those concerned, that is, all the representatives of Canada's various interested sectors.

The reasons, Mr. Speaker, that we are insisting that this issue be debated by Canadians are numerous, and all are legitimate. First, the list of witnesses who appeared before the legislative committee is extensive and impressive. Many of these witnesses are considered leaders in their field. They represent all sectors of the Canadian economy and the opinions they put forward, whether they were for or against the Bill, covered all sides of the question.

In addition, we received numerous highly detailed submissions reiterating the arguments raised by the witnesses, and these submissions were subjected to close scrutiny by Committee members, including the Hon. Member.

As a result, Mr. Speaker, we did not consider it appropriate to hear representatives of other countries discussing what is best for Canada. We have the expertise right here at home to do that. We are firmly convinced that foreign representatives