

Oral Questions

INQUIRY CONCERNING UNITED STATES GOVERNMENT

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for the same Minister, as he might expect. In the same program which he says was a fabrication, there was another statement by the chief spokesman for the drug industry in the United States. He said: "I think we have made more of an effort recently to talk to the U.S. trade representative, our Department of Commerce, our Department of State, and to say this is a bad law for us." To what extent did the United States Government, through the interaction at the trade negotiations between the Department of External Affairs and the office of the Secretary of State, make representations after June that the Canadian Government change the patent law as the Minister has now introduced it?

● (1510)

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Hon. Member was a Cabinet Minister in the Liberal Government which decided to change the patent law and restore patent protection in 1983.

Mr. Gray (Windsor West): We did not.

Mr. Andre: The Member knows, if he is paying attention, that we have been under pressure from all of our trading partners since 1969.

Mrs. Killens: Only four years.

Mr. Andre: Let me read just a bit from a letter dated September 24, 1986, from the British Pharmaceutical Association, London. It is concerned that the Canadian Government—

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry.

INQUIRY CONCERNING POSSIBLE REPRESENTATIONS

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, as a supplementary, if there is any example of fabrication in this House, it has just been given by the Minister. There was no decision in 1983 by our Government to change the Patent Act. We established a commission of study to look at the entire state of the art.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Beatty: Axworthy for leader.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. The Hon. Member will put his question.

Mr. Axworthy: I will put this question to the Minister because he did not answer it the first time. To what extent did the United States Government make direct representation during the trade negotiations or by other diplomatic means to

have the June draft of the Patent Bill altered to suit the kind of interest of the American drug industry?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): No one made representations to me either from the United States, through the trade office or through the External Affairs office or in any other way, Mr. Speaker. I consulted with groups in Canada on their reaction to the draft legislation. I recommended to my cabinet colleagues ways in which I thought the legislation could be improved. If, in fact, in committee Hon. Members are able to convince me that I am wrong in some of my suggestions, I am ready to listen to them. The recommended changes came out of consultations in which I and my office engaged, and from no one else.

FIRM'S ESTIMATE OF COST TO CONSUMERS

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. He keeps telling the House that there will be no additional cost to Canadians. Is the Minister aware or familiar with a study conducted by a respected accountancy firm, Coopers & Lybrand, which estimates the cost to Canadian consumers, as a result of those amendments, will be in the area of \$650 million?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I do not know who did that study but he, she, or they should be embarrassed. One of the other reasons I am anxious to get this Bill to committee is to look at those kinds of assumptions. The person who did that study would flunk Economics 101 if he or she presented it.

Let me repeat again that there is nothing in the legislation that will raise the price of drugs by one penny.

REQUEST THAT MINISTER TABLE COST IMPACT STUDIES

Mr. Neil Young (Beaches): My supplementary question, Mr. Speaker, is for the same Minister. Both the Minister's Department and the Minister of National Health and Welfare have conducted cost impact studies into this legislation. I applied for that information under Access to Information and it was denied under ministerial privilege or whatever. I ask the Minister again if he wants to come clean with Canadians, why does he not table these cost impact studies in the House so that all Canadians can take a look at how much it is going to cost?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely the reason we have our parliamentary system of second reading debate and committee study. At committee we will look at all those cost estimates and we will look at all the price estimates. We will do that. If the Hon. Member is interested in having Canadians know the truth, he will co-operate in having that Bill moved to committee.

An Hon. Member: What are you hiding?

Mr. Broadbent: Give us the information.