

Patent Act

[English]

Mr. Fennell: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been discussions among all Parties with respect to the question of extending the sitting hours of the House tonight. I wish to advise you, Mr. Speaker, that there is no intention on behalf of the Government to extend the hours of sitting. In this respect we have the agreement of the chief opposition Whip and the House Leader of the New Democratic Party. I feel this will put us all at ease and allow us to relax. We on this side of the House and Members opposite will not be calling for extended hours this evening.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order. There have been discussions in this respect. Perhaps just to make it perfectly clear, Your Honour could ask for the unanimous consent of the House with respect to adjourning at six o'clock today, after which time we will go into the proceedings on the adjournment debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Is there unanimous consent?

Some Hon. Members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Copps: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I was suggesting to the Conservative Members who are taking the bait, as it were—

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. The Hon. Member for Hamilton East (Ms. Copps) has the floor.

[Translation]

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, I think "mangent la ligne" is not a very good translation of the English. But in English, when you go fishing and a bunch of little fish eat your bait, the minnow or whatever... What the Conservative Members are doing now is, they're eating the bait, they're eating the whole thing. They are not listening to their constituents who will tell them in no uncertain terms: We want you to fight this legislation which is going to affect us as consumers and will cost us about \$3.5 billion in ten years. For instance, if we consider the province of Ontario...

[English]

In the Province of Ontario alone in current costs there will be an increase of \$43 million per year to the people who are buying current drugs. The real danger for the average consumer is not in the increased cost of current drugs. That is something which has now been accepted by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre). All last week he claimed that there would be no effect. What he says now is that there will not be an increase but that the decrease which is provoked by competition by the generics will occur less quickly. That is how he now explains it.

Let us consider a new drug coming on stream, for example, Tagamet which was a wonder drug for people who suffer from ulcers. These new drugs will continue to cost consumers

sometimes \$100, \$200, even \$500. In the case I just cited, there was a 50,000 per cent mark-up. This was brought about because we allow these companies *carte blanche* to monopolize the Canadian market-place. If our Conservative colleagues are really interested, then there will come a time when they will have to break away from the pack—and I do not mean the Rat Pack. There will come a time when they will have to break away from the Party line. I think all of us here have seen that in our own respective Parties from time to time. I humbly suggest that this is one time that those invisible masses in the Progressive Conservative Party, those Members who were elected with a huge landslide back in 1984 and from whom we have heard almost nothing since, should part company with the powers that be. This would be a good time for them to part company with the actions and political strategies of people such as Senator Atkins, and others, who desperately want to get the Prime Minister back on track but who, unfortunately, have failed to recognize the key to the Achilles' heel of the Conservative Party, that is, the question of Canadian sovereignty. That question has never been more clearly put than it is put in the Bill which is before us. Here we have a blatant, flagrant example of how the Government is prepared to sell out millions of Canadians, senior citizens, sick people and those on disability pensions. These people are not covered by provincial drug plans.

Having spoken to the Minister of Health for the Province of Ontario I can tell Hon. Members that we are putting these provincial drug plans in a strait-jacket as a result of this legislation. If a new drug comes on the market, and it may be a wonder drug, it may do for other diseases what Tagamet did for ulcers, then can Hon. Members imagine the savings to the Canadian health care system? Tagamet eliminated the need for surgery in the case of ulcers. If a new wonder drug comes on the scene because of these new monopoly provisions then, unfortunately, the cost will be so prohibitive that in most provinces a tremendous delay will occur before the drugs can be covered under the drug benefit formulary. If any Member has dealt with this issue he or she will know that if a drug is not on the drug benefit formulary then it is not covered by a provincial drug plan. I have many seniors in my own area who are forced to purchase drugs which do not currently come under the drug benefit formulary. The Minister's suggestion that the slack will be picked up by provincial Governments or insurance companies is simply not true. It is the consumer who will pay in the short term and it is the consumer who will pay in the long term.

● (1740)

I believe that our system has worked. It has taken Canadian drug prices from being the highest in the world to being the lowest in the world. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. Here we have a classic example of over-fix. The Government is making an attempt to fix something that is not broken and in truth it is attempting to buckle down to pressure from American multinationals in the drive for a free trade agreement. The