

*Patent Act*

I will read the question so I do not confuse Members opposite, particularly the only Minister in the Chamber at this particular time. I am sure she would want to know what the questions was. It says:

As you may know, the Government recently presented legislation which will give drug companies exclusive patent rights to manufacture and sell the drugs they invented for a longer period of time than they have now. Other companies will not be allowed to produce or sell less expensive copies of most drugs for 10 years. Do you yourself support or oppose this proposed legislation?

I think that is a fair and objective question. In that great Province of Alberta from which some very distinguished Members of Parliament come, including yourself, Mr. Speaker, 62 per cent are opposed to Bill C-22. The people in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, one would think, might be in favour of this legislation, but 69 per cent are opposed to this particular Bill. In Atlantic Canada, 56 per cent are opposed. In Quebec, 54 per cent are opposed and in Ontario, 54 per cent are opposed. That is very revealing information, as I am sure you would agree, Mr. Speaker.

The anticipated impact of the proposed legislation on the research activities in Canada of drug companies was researched. What do they say with regard to research? Will there be more research or increased profits? In Alberta, and I will concentrate on Alberta for a moment because I am aware of the Speaker's great interest in the concerns and aspirations of the people of that province, 59 per cent believe there would be increased profits for the multinational corporations. In British Columbia, 62 per cent of the people polled believe there will be increased profits. In Atlantic Canada, 55 per cent believe that and 60 per cent in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. The percentages of those who believe there will be more research are; 26 per cent in British Columbia, 32 per cent in Alberta, 30 per cent in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 32 per cent in Ontario, 34 per cent in Quebec and 28 per cent in the Atlantic provinces. So you see, Mr. Speaker, Canadians are very much against what the Government is doing.

What is the anticipated impact of the proposed legislation on drug prices, which was the third questions posed in this particular poll? It was a poll with respect to which the Minister challenged us here in the Chamber today to see if we could refute anything that he had in his possession, namely, the Decima poll. But this is a poll that was taken prior to that. The question asked in the poll was this:

Do you think we can expect the price of pharmaceutical drugs to increase, decrease or remain the same as a result of the proposed legislation?

• (1250)

Some 72 per cent of those polled believe that prices will increase. The breakdown of that figure across Canada is as follows: Some 78 per cent of those in British Columbia and in Atlantic Canada believe that prices will increase; some 63 per cent of those in Quebec, 73 per cent of those in Ontario, 76 per cent of those in Manitoba and Saskatchewan and 75 per cent of those in Alberta believe that drug prices will increase as a result of amendments to the Patent Act.

The fourth and final question posed in the poll which I am sharing with Members of the House today was:

In preparing this legislation, do you think the Mulroney government was paying more attention to the interests of multinational drug companies or to the interests of Canadian consumers?

Some 64 per cent of Canadians polled believe that the Government's main interest is that of multinational drug companies as opposed to that of Canadian consumers. The breakdown across Canada is as follows: Some 72 per cent of those in British Columbia, 66 per cent of those in Alberta, 71 per cent of those in Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 60 per cent of those in Atlantic Canada, 59 per cent of those in Quebec and 63 per cent of those polled in Ontario believe that the Government's main interest is in respect of multinational drug companies as opposed to consumers.

The Minister referred to some interesting statistics in his remarks. I would not want to say that he intentionally forgot, because that would be unparliamentary and I would not want to be unparliamentary because Your Honour quite rightly would point out that I was being unparliamentary, but for whatever reason he has forgotten what is in this particular poll commissioned for one of Canada's most respected newspapers and which was carried out by a respectable polling agency.

I now wish to go into a few other areas since it was alleged by some that the 1969 Patent Act had a negative effect in terms of job creation in Canada. The 1969 legislation is the legislation which is in existence today. In his recommendations Eastman dealt with this matter very thoroughly in order to dispel any suggestion that somehow job creation was retarded or prohibited under the 1969 legislation.

In Canada employment in the pharmaceuticals and medicines industry increased by almost 29 per cent between 1967 and 1982. Employment not only increased noticeably in this industry, it increased more rapidly than employment in all manufacturing in Canada. So on the issue of jobs it cannot be said, based on fact, that the existing legislation has in any way taken away from job creation. In fact, the complete opposite is true, which is evident on a review of the statistics from 1967 to 1982.

Employment in manufacturing increased by only 3.4 per cent between 1967 and 1982. The ratio of employment in pharmaceuticals and medicines to employment in all manufacturing increased during this period, rising from 0.74 per cent in 1967 to 0.92 per cent in 1982. Thus we can see that the legislation did not restrict or prohibit the creation of jobs, but rather increased economic opportunities. It provided jobs to those Canadians who wanted to work in this particular field.

Some observers have nevertheless commented that although employment may have increased in the pharmaceuticals and medicines industry from 1967 to 1982, it would have increased even more without the 1969 Act. That is the claim of Members opposite. Their claim does not appear to be supported by the facts. However, employment in pharmaceuticals and medicines in fact increased more rapidly in Canada than it did in the United States over the same period of time.