

*Patent Act*

• (1610)

Sometimes we have the Government undertaking to protect consumers in Canada from producers, particularly protecting them perhaps from the high wages that an employer has to pay to his workers and protecting them by bringing in goods from some country with a police state Government which keeps the wages down. In those cases the Government undertakes to help consumers. According to *The Toronto Sun* the Government is not helping the consumer here. It also says that it is not helping business.

They claim that the committee proposes 10 years of monopoly protection for new drugs to apply to drugs marketed after the Bill becomes law. The Conservative Bill would start the meter running as of June 27 of last year. In other words, on good conservative grounds, *The Toronto Sun* objects to having the Bill made retroactive. That is a very strong principle in the country, the principle that law should not be made retroactive. *The Toronto Sun* is taking a well-established position there and on that basis is opposing the Bill.

It goes on to point out further that, "Research and development commitments would be written into the Bill as they should be", referring again to the Senate amendments. It continues: "Standards would have to be met by each brand name company rather than by the industry as a whole. Individual companies that didn't measure up could lose all their patent protection".

We have heard many heart-rending pleas from the Minister over in that corner about how we must have this Bill because the poor, starving owners of drug companies cannot manufacture drugs in Canada without the extra profits that his Bill would guarantee them. However, he does not want them to guarantee the production in Canada that he says would be had by the profits from us from the higher drug prices. He wants to guarantee the higher drug prices that would come as a result of the Bill, but he does not want to require them to guarantee the production in Canada or the thousands of jobs which he says they would bring.

In fact the editorial goes on to say: "Annual increases in drug prices would have to be less than the increase in the Consumer Price Index", that is to say, if the Senate amendments were accepted.

The Minister has often assured us that we do not have to fear increases. Of course everybody knows that there will be some increase with inflation. All the Senate asked was—make it a firm part of the law that the annual increases in drug prices will have to be kept down below the general level of inflation. No, the Minister will not consider that at all.

It is very interesting that the Bill is being opposed by such a wide range of people in Canada. We have had expert opinions. Experts have studied the matter which admittedly is complex. The great weight of the expert opinions has been against the Government's Bill on the ground that it gives far too much to the multinational corporations and that what it gives them is

far more than necessary to enable them to do fairly the production in Canada that they claim to do. Experts such as Roy Davidson, a former senior economic adviser to the Government; William Watson, a McGill University economist; John Hill, a Brantford pharmacist; and so on.

Other sectors of the public have communicated with us in letters to their Members and in their appearances before the committee. In agriculture we have heard from veterinarians and Keystone Agricultural Producers. Of course there have been groups of many thousands of senior citizens among those who, under our present state of medicine, are very dependent on prescription drugs. Most of them are of a fairly conservative point of view and probably would have normally voted for a conservative candidate whether of the Conservative Party or of the Liberal Party; there is not that much difference. However, in spite of that general point of view, we know well about many thousands of senior citizens who have not only signed petitions against the Bill but have appeared before caucuses of Parliament and in front of the Parliament Buildings to ask us not to adopt the Bill. There have also been the Manitoba Coalition on Health and Higher Education, the National Federation of Nurses Unions, and the Consumers' Association of Canada.

Aside from these citizens' organizations we have had a great many newspaper editorials and columns such as the editorial which I read from *The Toronto Sun*. I will refer to more of them later.

We have also had reactions from provincial Governments. It is not every time that a provincial Government, let alone several provincial Governments, undertakes to make its views known on a Bill going through Parliament. Some Bills concern them, and some do not. Evidently this Bill concerns not only the producers of drugs, including producers of generic drugs in Canada as well as multinational corporations, and not only consumers. It also concerns provincial Governments.

We have had representations from the Government of Manitoba. Hon. Members on the other side may wish to assume that that is only because it happens to be a New Democratic Government. However, Saskatchewan is a rootin'-tootin' Conservative Government and it is unhappy with the Bill, as are the Saskatoon City Council, the Government of Ontario, the Government of Prince Edward Island, and the Government of Newfoundland. Good heavens, the Government of British Columbia is lined up against the Bill. If there were ever an enthusiastic backer of wide-open, wild-eyed, absolutely no holds barred, *laissez-faire* free enterprise, it is the Government of British Columbia, but it is against the Bill.

The reason is plain enough. Under our public health insurance system the Governments of the provinces are responsible for managing the costs of public health insurance, and prescription drugs are a very significant part of those costs. The Governments of the provinces know, whether they are New Democrat, Liberal, or Conservative, that the costs of prescription drugs are going to go up and that the Governments of the provinces will be stuck with paying those costs.