

Oral Questions

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Mr. Russell MacLellan (Cape Breton-The Sydneys): Why is the Government continually allowing oil companies to pick the pockets of Canadians?

Mr. John McDermid (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Energy, Mines and Resources): Mr. Speaker, the Government is not interfering in the market-place. The cheaper gasoline coming into Canada via independents from the United States is forcing prices to go down in this country. Fair competition like that will continue to keep the prices down and that is what we want for the consumer, fair prices for them here in Canada, low prices, and that is what they are now getting.

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PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

MULTINATIONAL DRUG COMPANIES—PATENT LEGISLATION
INQUIRY

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Deputy Prime Minister. One Minister has just said that it is the Government's policy not to let conglomerates go their merry way, but the senior spokesperson for international trade in the United States, who reports directly to President Reagan, is reported to have said yesterday that the U.S. Government has become impatient with the Government of Canada for its tardiness in changing our patent laws as they affect drug prices and large conglomerates. Are we now going to have legislation introduced in Canada which will benefit the multinational drug companies, precisely because that is what the United States wants?

Mr. Bill Domm (Parliamentary Secretary to Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and Canada Post): Mr. Speaker, I will give the same answer to that question which was given in the House of Commons yesterday by the Minister responsible, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. We will be announcing a policy. We are in consultation. The position will be the same as it has always been. When it is announced, whatever the policy is, it will create jobs.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Domm: It will not eliminate generic manufacturing. I am sure that, unlike the former administration which found it impossible to deal with the situation in any form, we will deal with it in order to create economic growth and jobs.

Mr. Broadbent: Mr. Speaker, as a supplementary question for the Minister of National Health and Welfare, I will say to the Hon. Member who just replied that one thing we know—

Mr. Hnatyshyn: Order. Question.

Mr. Broadbent: —is that the change will cost Canadians \$200 million a year in drug prices.

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. Question to the Minister.

POSSIBLE EFFECT ON SENIOR CITIZENS

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): My supplementary question to the Minister of National Health and Welfare is this. Since the Eastman report has estimated that a change could cost Canadians some \$200 million a year, and since senior citizens will be the major group of Canadians affected, will the Minister assure the House that, before legislation is passed, the senior citizens of Canada will have a chance to appear before that committee and have their views heard and listened to by the Government?

● (1425)

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, first, the Hon. Member should realize that Eastman also recommended changes to the present system. That is something which should be taken into consideration.

Second, the Hon. Member asked whether or not senior citizens and other groups would have the right to appear before the committee should the Government come forward with legislation. That is generally the procedure when legislation is before the House. I think it will apply in this case as well.

VIEWS OF PROVINCES

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, we will take that as a promise and not as a sacred trust.

Since the Minister is responsible for health services in general—and he should obviously have a concern about this—will he assure the House that the changes contemplated in the years affecting the holding of patents will not be more substantial than those recommended in the Eastman report? Has the Minister consulted with the provinces to find out their views with respect to how they will be affected?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I hope the Hon. Member has more assurance of his own ability and that of members of his Party who sit on the Health Committee, or the appropriate committee to which any legislation might be referred. They can ask for whatever witnesses they want to appear or think should appear.

Regarding any elements of any legislation, the Hon. Member will have to wait until it is produced, if and when it is produced.