

Trade Marks Act

department must continue its work to clean up and steer the country in the right direction.

As for distribution, as I said a while ago, today there is an increasing tendency . . . I remember when I started in business I had a grocery store. I no longer have it since I transformed it. We sold several patent medicines. They were much less expensive than in drugstores. As soon as they were transferred to drugstores, about 50 per cent of the drugs that we were allowed to sell were taken away from us, and their price doubled immediately. This was not a victory for the population. I agree that all drugs, especially prescription drugs, must be sold in drugstores. All the drugs which must be rigidly controlled and sold by a specialist must be sold in drugstores. However, we should continue to sell patent medicines in stores, in groceries, to help the population, the ordinary worker, who has a low income.

Mr. Chairman, the policy announced by the minister is a good one since he talked about the possibility of retailers continuing to sell patent medicines provided that they are well labelled, that their ingredients are listed and that the population stops being deceived as it has been in the past and still is today. I hope this bill will open the door to the department so that the health of the population can be protected through the Food and Drugs Act.

[English]

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Chairman, perhaps I could call it one o'clock.

The Chairman: It being one o'clock, I do now leave the chair until two o'clock this afternoon.

At one o'clock the committee took recess.

AFTER RECESS

The committee resumed at 2 p.m.

Mr. Yewchuk: Mr. Chairman, this is a very small bill; therefore, it is going through the House without too much discussion. But even though it is a small bill it may have very wide-ranging effects on certain aspects of our society. It suggests the repeal of the Proprietary or Patent Medicine Act and some changes in the Trade Marks Act in order to clear the way for institution of regulations to govern patent medicines. At the present time, patent medicines are kept secret from the public in so far as their ingredients are concerned. The only ones who know the ingredients are the Minister of National Health and Welfare or his disciples, and the manufacturer.

With regard to the secrecy aspect being outdated and indeed dangerous, we agree with the principle of this bill, namely, that this secrecy aspect of patent medicines should be removed. However, we wonder why the minister chose to be so secretive about the regulations which are going to be brought in to replace those acts which are being repealed and changed. We disagree with this kind of government secrecy; it makes it almost impossible properly and thoroughly to debate the pros and cons of the long-term outcome of this legislation.

[Mr. Gauthier (Roberval).]

I would like to know why the minister seems to be carrying on the tradition established by this administration of this passion for secrecy, especially when there does not appear to be anything to hide. There is no reason why these regulations should not have been given to us. I made several attempts, by telephoning the minister's office in the past month or so, to obtain a copy of the regulations. Without providing any reason, each time I was refused. We are not the only ones concerned: the industry involved in the production of patent medicines is concerned. The minister said—I think I quote him correctly—that the secrecy aspect has no place in today's modern society. However, in presenting this bill he is selling the House another patent medicine under the old rules. We still do not know the constituents of it, since the new rules are still secret. Only the minister and maybe some disciples in his department know, but we do not know what they are. That is a rather strange approach to take. There is no obvious reason for it, yet it is being done.

The stated purpose of the bill as it appeared in *Debates of the Senate* and the minister's speech reminds me of the television advertising of a patent medicine where certain claims are made, but there is no way we can verify whether the medicine will do what is claimed for it because we do not know the ingredients. In this case we have a bill presented as a patent medicine. We do not know what it will achieve in the long run, other than being told that in the future some regulations will be brought in, making a few corrections for improvement. The minister should rise in the House, if he returns to the chamber, or his parliamentary secretary should—who is also capable of doing it—and explain why the regulations have not been presented.

Some hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Yewchuk: I thought I would be nice to her, since this is the first time she is piloting a bill through the House. Perhaps she can give a sensible explanation as to why we were not provided with the regulations in advance. As I mentioned before, the intent of the bill sounds all right. For example, it will be a great help, not just to people in treating themselves and knowing what they are getting but to the medical profession in dealing with patients who have used patent medicines. There may be some side-effects from a patent medicine for which a patient presents himself to his doctor. However, the doctor does not know what was in the patent medicine and it may be difficult for him to interpret why the side effects occurred or what is the best treatment. The same applies to allergic reactions. If you do not know the cause of allergy, it is more difficult to treat it in a reasonable way. Therefore, it is important that the ingredients of patent medicines be known.

It is also important for the public to be able to scientifically verify claims that are made for patent medicines. This leads me into the subject of advertising. We have a situation where manufacturers or distributors of patent medicines can make virtually any claim they please. The public has no way of verifying whether the claim is scientifically true. The only way the public can judge is by taking the medicine and subjectively trying to determine whether they are getting better. That is an extremely unscientific way of assessing the usefulness of a medica-