

Patent Act

As Members of Parliament surely we would want to listen very carefully to what those people are saying. They have to deal with those affected. They must have some understanding of how the system works and how it will work as a result of this Bill. I cannot understand why the Government, or perhaps I should say the Minister, continues to say it is only opposition Members who are opposed to Bill C-22. We have reputable organizations like the Manitoba Coalition on Health and Higher Education who are opposed to Bill C-22.

I received a letter, as all members on the committee did, from a couple in British Columbia. They sent a copy to their Conservative Member of Parliament. God knows what he did with it. However, it was sent to him and to the Clerk of the committee. It is dated December 28, 1986. It says:

Dear Sir:

My husband and I are both in our 60s and we are writing to express our urgent concern over the proposed change in the drug legislation. We feel this legislation should not be allowed to pass as it will, without a doubt, lead to increased drug prices. We can now purchase a generic drug at one-third to one-half the price of the same brand name drug. If the generic companies are no longer able to copy a brand name drug for at least ten years, people, and particularly the older person, will face an increased burden on their already limited income.

As concerned citizens and voters, we urge you to reconsider this legislation.

Ordinary Canadians, concerned about prices they have to pay for prescription drug prices, are writing Members of Parliament to express their opposition to the thrust of Bill C-22.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada came before our committee and made a very impressive and moving presentation. In listening to that presentation and reading their brief, I thought, for the benefit of Members who did not have an opportunity to be there, including the House Leader of the NDP, I would read into the record—

Mr. Riis: A point of order, Mr. Speaker. I have been listening with rapt attention to my hon. friend's comments on this Bill which, I appreciate, he is speaking against. Since the time on third reading debate is limited to today and another day, tomorrow or some other day, does he plan to continue his comments which, in a sense, preclude his colleagues from speaking, as well as others, in this House? I am as much concerned about his own colleagues who have indicated an interest in speaking. I am just kind of curious about the motive of the Hon. Member with respect to helping us decide how we might approach the debate on this Bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): It is not a point of order but maybe the Hon. Member can say whether he plans to share any of this debate which, as you know, will come to an end after two days. I know other Members would like to speak, but it is up to the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall). The Chair is at your disposal.

Mr. Dingwall: Mr. Speaker, in response to the reasonable request of my colleague, I do have other things I wish to read into the record. I do not think it will take an inordinate amount of time. They are important—

Mr. Riis: Indeed they are.

Mr. Dingwall:—to our deliberations.

The Multiple Sclerosis Society of Canada made a presentation to the committee, as I was saying before a point of order was allowed by the Chair, and I would like to read into the record the conclusions and recommendations the presentation made.

Results of the survey indicated that while the majority of their respondents had full or partial assistance in the payment of their drug costs, 24 per cent did not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order, please. I do not know whether I misinterpreted what the Hon. Member said. Did he say the point of order was allowed by the Chair? I said it was not a point of order and I put the question to the Hon. Member. I do not want to get into an argument between the NDP and the Liberals. It is up to them to decide who is going to be the next speaker and who is not. I do not intend to recess this House again in three, four or five seconds either. You have to decide among yourselves what is going on. The Hon. Member has unlimited time, and I am just suggesting to the Hon. Member that this is a two-day debate and maybe he would like some of his colleagues to take part in the debate. That is all I said and that is the way I interpreted it.

Mr. Dingwall: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. I am glad you made that clarification because I had a different interpretation of your remarks. I appreciate your second statement because it does, for me, qualify the interpretation I originally had of your first submission. So I thank you very much for rising in your place and explaining that very important point to me.

Of those paying their own drug costs, 29 per cent paid between \$50 and \$100 a month, and 18 per cent paid over \$100. On an annual basis this represents a direct cost of between \$600 and several thousand dollars to each of these people. That is a phenomenal amount of money for those people to have to pay.

Of the 16 most commonly used drugs by respondents, eight had generic or other competition. Savings achieved by the use of cheaper equivalents ranged from 21 per cent to 89 per cent. The proportion of drugs with competition in any future list will decrease if amendments to the Patent Act are passed.

● (1620)

This presentation, which is neither against nor for the legislation, assesses very reasonably the shortcomings in Bill C-22. It should be read in its entirety by all Hon. Members in order that they will have a better and fuller appreciation of what is taking place.

The Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops also wrote to the Minister. I believe it was the Bishop of Calgary, Paul J. O'Byrne, who wrote to the Minister expressing his concerns about Bill C-22. I should like to read part of his submission to destroy the very weak argument and comment of the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) that the opposition to the Bill is in the imagination of opposition Members of Parliament. He wrote the following: