

*Patent Act*

We introduced amendments at report stage in order to give Canadians an opportunity to hear the debate and understand where the Parties stood. I would have thought that if one had such a great case to support Bill C-22, government Members would have been keen to take the opportunity to support the thrust of the provisions of Bill C-22. I would have thought that out of 211 Members at least half would rise to present their great case that the Minister talks about. That did not happen. Very few Members spoke to the amendments to Bill C-22 at report stage.

I suggest that we must reflect upon this process very carefully. It is true that we heard from a number of witnesses, but many more wanted to appear. There was a certain amount of time given to witnesses, but not enough. There were 45 minutes given to the Canadian Labour Congress, to the Consumers' Association of Canada, to the Minister of Health in the Province of Manitoba. There were 45 minutes given to the National Anti-Poverty Organization and to the Canadian Auto Workers Union. That is not sufficient time to investigate and probe into the presentations by the Canadian Drug Manufacturers Association and the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada. That would have been a golden opportunity for Members on all sides to question the authenticity of the remarks contained in their submissions.

The Minister and his predecessors have argued in and out of the House that since Canada must live in the international community our regulatory system with regard to the pharmaceutical industry must be in keeping with other countries of the world, particularly the United States. Therefore, our present system is going to be changed. It will not become exactly the same as the American system, but we are moving in that direction. That was the argument for changing our laws to become internationally competitive, to move to the American system. Let us look at the process of the committee.

● (1240)

**Mr. Benjamin:** So we can get free trade.

**Mr. Dingwall:** That is right. It was moved by Members opposite, that if that is the way in which the Government wishes to go, logically, and if one is being honest intellectually, one would want to have individuals and organizations in the United States come before our parliamentary committee to expound upon their views on the system presently in place in the United States.

I think, for instance, of the National Senior Citizens Organization in the United States, of the Chairman of the United States Generic Pharmaceutical Industry, and a Congressman who chairs the subcommittee on health and who is now leading an investigation into the high cost of prescription drugs in the United States, Congressman Waxman, with whom I met. I would have thought we would have tried to have a few Republicans come before the committee just to get an understanding and better appreciation. But no, the process was curtailed. We were prohibited and limited so we could not hear from our colleagues and friends from the United States.

Was that particular motion brought in before our deliberations began? No, it was not. They waited until we heard PMAC. At that time its president was an American citizen. I had no objection, and I am certain my colleagues in the New Democratic Party had no objections as well, to this particular individual coming before our committee and expounding on his views as to why he favours the legislation. However, it was only after the lead spokesperson and organizer for Bill C-22, PMAC, was allowed, that all other individuals who may have been opposed to the Government's Bill were prohibited from coming before the committee and examining Bill C-22.

The process from its early stages—the way in which the Government tried to introduce the Bill in June of 1986—in itself, I think, tells us of the intent and motive of Members opposite. So the process from then until now, with time allocation, closure on this particular Bill, has raised considerable anxiety among Canadians who have called upon opposition Members of Parliament to fight their case in the highest chamber in this land, the House of Commons.

The Minister had the audacity to refer to polls. He said, "I challenge anyone here to refute this poll". The poll to which he referred was conducted by Decima Research. Decima does its work for the Conservative Party of Canada, and it conducted this poll because PMAC, the multinational organization, the lead organization supporting Bill C-22, retained Decima to conduct the research.

One may come from Edmonton, from Nova Scotia, from Newfoundland, but is there any thinking person who did not know what the conclusion of that poll would be? We knew before it was taken. Even those of us who live on that great island of Cape Breton knew what the conclusion would be. It was not anything new that Members of Parliament were being given. The agenda was written; what the questions were going to be and, of course, what the answers were going to be. But that was the Minister's poll. I think it was taken around February 26 to March 4 of 1987.

The Minister said here in the Chamber today, "I challenge anyone to refute the contents of that particular poll". Ministers of the Crown have to be careful. Sometimes they have these periods of amnesia where they conveniently forget. Does the Minister forget the poll which was conducted in January of 1987? I want to read what that poll said, and I am prepared to table it for Members opposite. I know my colleague, the Hon. Member for Windsor—Walkerville (Mr. McCurdy), would love to have a copy of this particular poll. I will give the House the highlights of the poll:

A majority of Canadians oppose the proposed drug patent extension legislation with significant levels of opposition among Canadians from all walks of life.

What are the numbers? In this particular poll 58 per cent of the Canadian people opposed amendments to the Patent Act, while 30 per cent were in favour. Sixty-six per cent of the people in British Columbia were opposed to the amendments to the Patent Act.