STATEMENT MADE BY UNITED STATES INDUSTRY'S SPOKESMAN

Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel—Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. In last night's TV report, Mr. Stettler of the American multinationals said, and I quote: "The success of the Canadian system was and is a threat."

Why does the Minister favour a lobby group which has illegally tried to lessen competition, said that no-name drugs are inferior drugs, and has held a former Minister personally accountable for the deaths of thousands of people? Why does the Minister not favour the sick, the weak, and the elderly?

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I favour the restoration of patent protection for drugs for the same reason that the past Liberal Government did when they announced their decision in that regard in June of 1983.

If there is going to be research in this important area of biotechnology and drugs, and it is foolhardy for Canada to exclude itself from this important area, there has to be patent protection provided. The rest of the world recognizes that. I wonder why the Hon. Member and her Party do not at this point in time, although they apparently did three years ago.

PROPOSED REVIEW BOARD'S PRACTICES

Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel—Ahuntsic): In answer to a question from our Leader, the Minister said that he improved the Bill. According to Mr. Stettler yesterday, they were not happy with the sanctions. They wanted to lighten the sanctions. He got what he wanted from this Government, the sanctions were lightened. Does the Minister know that the review board can now investigate only one drug, plus another one, instead of the whole company, as it was in the Côté Bill?

• (1500)

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I happen to believe as a matter of principle that punishments should match the offences more or less. I thought the punishments were excessive. As I have said publicly to Dr. Eastman and to anyone else who was interested, I am willing to discuss that. If in fact evidence can be presented that the sanctions need to be toughened up some, I am willing to consider those. I am not of a closed mind on that. However, I would hope the fundamental principle that the punishment should match the offence is a principle which Hon. Members could respect and understand.

FOREKNOWLEDGE OF LEGISLATION'S CONTENT CLAIMED BY AMERICAN LOBBYIST

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs and it is on the same subject. Mr. C. Joe Stettler, the former head of the American drug company lobby which got the Government to change its drug legislation, said on television last night that a week before the Minister introduced the Bill he knew of two precise changes which would be in it. When the Bill was introduced, lo and behold those precise changes emerged. Could the Minister explain to the House of Commons how this man, a resident outside Canada, knew before elected Members of Parliament what would be in the legislation?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I answered that question which was put by the Leader of the Opposition. I pointed out that the draft Bill was released at the end of June. I had discussions with a wide variety of groups, as did my office and a lot of my officials, to discuss ways in which it might be improved, amended, and adjusted. Those are consultations. During the course of consultations, one discusses things like that. People may make assumptions, but the only ones who had access to that Bill before it was brought into the House were the spokesman for the New Democratic Party, the Hon. Member for Winnipeg North, and the spokesman for the Liberal Party, whom I briefed in advance as a matter of courtesy.

Mr. Broadbent: The Minister knows that the Members on this side of the House had a briefing about two hours before. This other gentleman, who is a United States citizen living outside Canada, was informed a week before. That is the big difference.

[*Translation*]

INQUIRY WHETHER LIE UTTERED

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I have another question for the Minister. Yesterday the Minister said on television that anyone in Canada who suggested that the price of drugs would increase would be lying. Dr. Eastman, an expert in the field, said that this would happen. Is he a liar?

[*English*]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question to the Leader of the Opposition. My office was in consultation with Dr. Eastman this morning. He informs us that the CBC took his remarks out of context and that in fact he agrees with me and understands, as anyone with an open mind would understand, that there is no increase in price of any drug possible as a result of the changes which we are proposing. If the Hon. Member would co-operate and allow us to take this matter to committee, I will be happy to demonstrate it to him and to anyone else who is interested.

CBC INTERVIEW

Hon. Edward Broadbent (Oshawa): Mr. Speaker, I would like the Minister to co-operate. I will ask him a very precise question. Perhaps he will explain to the House how Dr. Eastman could have been taken out of context. In part the transcript reads:

Will prices go up?