

ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

SUGGESTED USE OF LOW SULPHUR WESTERN COAL BY ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr. Joe Reid (St. Catharines): Mr. Speaker, for environmentally conscious Niagara I strongly support the Government's "Made in Canada" program to fight acid rain by using western coal in Ontario. If we can get that province to go along with the federal-provincial task force recommendation regarding the use of low sulphur western coal in Ontario's hydro thermal generating plants, we will see large reductions in Ontario's acid gas emissions, create much needed cargo for the St. Lawrence Seaway, and create 13,000 jobs across the country, 40 per cent of which will be in Ontario. Who is dragging his feet?

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

PATENT ACT AMENDING LEGISLATION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, hundreds of thousands of sick and elderly Canadians find the Government's decision to raise drug prices a very bitter pill to swallow.

[Translation]

Senior U.S. officials have admitted they put pressure on the Canadian Government to amend our patents legislation for pharmaceutical products. However, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs denies such pressure was exerted. My question to the Minister is therefore: Why does he not at least have the courage to admit what he has done to the elderly and the sick in this country?

● (1420)

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition continues to misrepresent what the Bill will accomplish. He asks what pressure we responded to. For example, the National Assembly in the Province of Quebec under two different Governments unanimously passed resolutions asking us to do this. That is pressure to which we responded.

In fact for 17 years all of our partners in the western industrialized world have been asking Canada to get in phase with the rest of the world with regard to respecting intellectual property. The fact is that we as a Government believe that Canada should be involved in this vital area of high technology and research. If the Liberal Party thinks it is appropriate that the rest of the world does health research while we in Canada do not, we disagree with it.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Oral Questions

[Translation]

INQUIRY WHETHER ALLEGATION IS FALSE THAT GOVERNMENT IS AMENDING PHARMACEUTICAL PRODUCTS LEGISLATION AS CONSEQUENCE OF PRESSURE

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): I just heard the Secretary of State for External Affairs. Yesterday, he said that the information contained in this sworn statement was false. My question is therefore directed to the Secretary of State. Is it false that Mr. Pratt is the President of Pfizer, a U.S. pharmaceutical company? Is it false that Mr. Pratt met with our Ambassador to the United States, Mr. Gotlieb? Is it false that Mr. Pratt put pressure on Mr. Gotlieb to amend our patent legislation? Is it false that as a result of such pressure, the Canadian Government amended our legislation as a favour to Mr. Pratt and others?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, it is false.

[English]

REPRESENTATIONS MADE TO CANADIAN AMBASSADOR

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, sometimes the glare of the truth blinds the Minister. I will direct a further question to him. When the Secretary of State for External Affairs first read the text of the affidavit which was deposited with our Embassy in Washington 72 hours ago, did he inquire as to the position of Mr. Pratt who was not only the president of a leading American pharmaceutical company but also the President's Chairman of the Advisory Committee on Trade Negotiations? Did he inquire whether that placed undue pressure upon our ambassador?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): No, Mr. Speaker, I did not make those inquiries. The ambassador has made it clear that his recollection of the events referred to in the affidavit differ from that of the person who signed the affidavit.

REPRESENTATIONS ALLEGEDLY MADE TO GOVERNMENT

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. We know that Canada and in fact the ambassador in Washington were lobbied on the drug legislation by the Chairman of the President's Advisory Committee on Trade Negotiations who also happens to be the president of one of the most influential and profitable drug companies in the world.

How can the Minister reconcile his persistent statements in this House that he received no representations whatsoever from the United States when the document says unequivocally that there were representations made to the Canadian Government? Will the Minister explain to the House that this is in fact a contradiction made by him and his Government to cover up the fact that the multinational corporations are writing Canadian legislation affecting our senior citizens?