

Senator Murray: As for the statistical information sought by the honourable senator, I suggest that he put that question on the order paper and a reply will be forthcoming in due course.

Senator Frith: The flimflam is on!

Senator Bosa: The chickens have come home to roost!

Hon. L. Norbert Thériault: Honourable senators, I think I have heard the Honourable Leader of the Government in the Senate state that the Drug Prices Review Board will be in place by March, and that that will put pressure on lowering the price of drugs.

I know that the Leader of the Government in the Senate does not want to mislead this house. Could he tell me what section of Bill C-22 would give the authority to the Drug Prices Review Board to put pressure on anyone to lower the price of drugs?

Senator Murray: I have said that the existence of the Drug Prices Review Board will exert downward pressure on drug prices with the consumer price index as the marker—that was my statement.

Senator Frith: As “a marker”; it is not “the marker.”

Senator Murray: Well, as a marker, if you wish.

In any case, I do not have the act in front of me at the moment, and the honourable senator is quite capable of looking up the reference himself.

Senator Thériault: Well, honourable senators, yes, I have gone over that bill a thousand times and more. That is one of the reasons why I was not satisfied with the section in the bill that created the Drug Prices Review Board. Not only was I not satisfied but a great majority of people in Canada were not satisfied. I can only speak for myself, but had I known that the drug companies would take advantage of the short time that would elapse—

Senator Murray: —you would have passed the bill right away.

Senator Thériault: I would never have passed the bill, and I do not think many of us in the Senate would have passed it.

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

An Hon. Senator: Right on!

Senator Thériault: Honourable senators, I am not surprised at all to hear the government and the Leader of the Government in the Senate trying to place the blame on the opposition for delaying the bill. Yes, we should be blamed—not for delaying but for passing that bill, which will cost the people of Canada, the senior citizens of Canada, the poor people of Canada, and the working poor of Canada billions of dollars in the next few years—

Some Hon. Senators: Hear, hear!

Senator Thériault: —which will be taken by the drug companies across the border to the United States to satisfy the whim of the Conservative Government of Canada and the drug

[Senator Frith.]

companies. Yes, you had better blame somebody, because there is going to be a lot of blame to be taken.

• (1430)

Senator Frith: It was a scam, and we were all the marks.

Senator Murray: My honourable friends' comments have been noted.

DRUG PRICES REVIEW BOARD—COMING INTO FORCE OF POWERS

Hon. Ian Sinclair: Honourable senators, the minister stated on two occasions that the board would be in place next month or so, and then he stated later that it would be in place in March. He went on to say that “It”—the board—“would exert downward pressure on prices with the CPI as a marker.” That is my note.

My question to the Leader of the Government is: When did the powers of the Drug Prices Review Board become effective?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government and Minister of State for Federal-Provincial Relations): Honourable senators, I am sorry, but I cannot answer that question. It seems to me that there are regulations yet to be passed for the establishment of that board. Whether it became effective with proclamation, I do not know.

Senator Sinclair: I would suggest to the Leader of the Government that the bill indicates that certain sections will not come into force until later, but, as I recall, those are technical sections dealing with the Patent Act and have nothing to do with the provisions in the bill dealing with the Drug Prices Review Board. Perhaps the Leader of the Government would check that.

My further question is: If the sections dealing with the Drug Prices Review Board came into effect on proclamation, is that the effective date when downward pressure on prices with the CPI as a marker would run from?

Senator Murray: I can only convey to the Senate the statement of my colleague, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, who told the House of Commons—

Senator Guay: “There will be no increases,” he said.

Senator Murray: —the other day—on January 22, to be exact—that it will be necessary to get the regulations promulgated before the Drug Prices Review Board is able to exercise that authority.

Senator Sinclair: On what date does the authority become operative? Is it when the board is set up or when the bill was proclaimed?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I will have to inquire.

DRUG PRICE INCREASES—BASIS OF STATISTICS

Hon. Ian Sinclair: Honourable senators, earlier the Leader of the Government made reference to certain statistics. Could he tell us whether those were based on figures from Statistics