

Adjournment Debate

Mr. Redway: Do not forget the Progressive Conservative government under John Robarts.

Mr. Edwards: My friend says remember the government of Ontario. It was a different age, an age of government intervention. I think the less intervention we do, the better.

I would remind my hon. friend that back on February 7 when he posed this question, the minister did respond by saying this: "When we look at housing, transportation, food, health and education and we compare with the Americans, the cost of living in Canada is lower than that of the United States".

As this House knows, Canada must be able to answer concerns from other foreign governments about any special treatment we are perceived to afford Canadian-made goods and services in comparison to foreign-made goods and services offered for sale in the marketplace.

There is another level of concern. What, for example, constitutes a Canadian suit or dress when the component materials originate outside this country and are made into garments by Canadian workers? How would one answer the question of what, in fact, constitutes a Canadian automobile? There is intense international debate about these matters.

The domestic content of automobiles, for example, is currently a matter of discussion between Canada and the U.S. as both countries try to maintain vehicle production levels.

Finally, like consumers in most countries, Canadians are first and foremost price conscious and have a demanding sense of quality. Value for money is of paramount importance. Budget conscious Canadians undoubtedly base their shopping decisions on value rather than country of origin and because pricing is considerably competitive, that will advantage Canadian companies.

THALIDOMIDE VICTIMS

Mr. Alex Kindy (Calgary Northeast): Mr. Speaker, on March 18, 1992, I asked the Minister of National Health and Welfare to review decisions made by an unqualified official in his department, Mr. Greg Smith. These decisions legally and medically affect three thalidomide victims in my constituency, Darcy Petkau, Mrs. Cheryl Wood and Laurel Webb. The minister's response in the

House to my question was irresponsible and arrogant. He simply said no.

I would like to remind the minister that on February 13, 1990, when this program was announced in the House by the Minister of National Health and Welfare the minister said: "This program would be on the basis of compassion and understanding and not liability". As well, he went on to say: "I would like to assure everyone in the country that the funding I am announcing today is over and above the settlements the victims received from the manufacturer of thalidomide".

He also indicated that the government estimated that there were only 75 to 100 people living in Canada who were affected.

I dispute his numbers because I was practising medicine at that time and I know how many people were prescribed thalidomide at that time. Basically what the current minister is now saying is that the victims must either have been on the original list which the department compiled in 1963, or have received a settlement from a drug company.

There are many additional victims who can and are producing legal medical records as proof, like my three constituents, for their eligibility for the program. However, the minister and his departmental staff are stonewalling.

I would like to quote a letter from one of those constituents, a letter written by Dr. Boyar on October 18, 1991, to Mr. Greg Smith, Director, Extraordinary Assistance Plan, here in Ottawa:

Dear Mr. Smith:

This is to confirm that I did deliver the above patient on 07 May 1962 while still in general practice. His birth defect is a classical thalidomide defect involving his left hand. This has been recently documented for you by Dr. Fowlow, plastic surgeon.

The doctor admits that he had prescribed thalidomide to the mother during her pregnancy.

Another medical record is that for Cheryl Wood and it is from the Shriners Hospital for Crippled Children, dated June 16, 1965. It says:

Deformity of the left forearm and left hand, duration since birth. The mother was extremely sick during the early part of the pregnancy and used thalidomide tablets.

This is medical and legal proof that those people had been prescribed thalidomide.