

Food and Drugs Act

the points covered in my brief, and with the support of the government officials, once again bring to the attention of these provincial health officials the possible flaws in the operation of some of the plans that are now being worked out in the provinces. I am also hopeful that he will put forward the view that I believe most citizens of this country feel most hon. members take, namely that there must be some way of assuring the co-operation of the drug companies involved in some type of annual participation in this program. I know there are constitutional difficulties.

I know there are difficulties in persuading people to do certain things, but I submit to the minister that public opinion at this time may well be standing behind any recommendations he wishes to make to this coming meeting with regard to drug company participation in the expense of a rehabilitation program.

I have one further thought to present and I mentioned this in my maiden speech. I referred to red tape and the government moving slowly. It certainly does not add to my impatience to see how slowly these things move but I should like to say that in my own province the provincial officials are doing a very thorough job in connection with this matter. With regard to one case in which I was particularly interested I have now been informed by the health officials that the child is to go to the hospital on November 15 for the beginning of these treatments. I understand that it takes time to do this thing thoroughly and properly but the machinery is beginning to operate. I again wish to leave with the minister the thought that the responsibility for the ultimate success of this program rests at the federal level and it is only with the federal government acting as the prime mover and taking the ultimate responsibility that we can assure the success of our program for the thalidomide victims.

Mr. Colin Cameron (Nanaimo-Cowichan-The Islands): Mr. Speaker, I am sure I share the view of all members of the house that it will be with great relief and satisfaction that the people of Canada will greet this legislation after the thalidomide tragedy of last summer. I do not wish in any way to prolong the debate or to delay the passage of the bill. My purpose in rising is to call attention to and to pay tribute to the services of an outstanding lady in this thalidomide tragedy. I refer, of course, to Dr. Frances Oldham Kelsey of the United States food and drug administration who is a native of my own constituency on Vancouver island and of whom we are extremely proud today. The painstaking care with which Dr. Kelsey examined the medical reports from overseas

and the stubborn courage and determination with which she resisted pressures to permit the drug to go on the United States market saved countless thousands of American parents from the tragedy that unfortunately befell some Canadian parents and many European parents.

The President of the United States has recognized Dr. Kelsey's outstanding services in a recent investiture and I think it only appropriate that we in this house should record our pride in the outstanding services to our American neighbours of one who is a native daughter of Canada. We can perhaps only regret that the opportunity did not exist at that time for a person of similar capacities to perform a similar service for the people of Canada.

(Translation):

Mr. Georges Valade (St. Mary): Mr. Speaker, before talking to this very important bill, I would like first to express the gratefulness the members of the medical profession feel towards the staff of the food and drug directorate.

In my opinion, that measure should not challenge the qualifications and the efficiency of the members of the directorate who have given eloquent proof of their interest and loyalty when it comes to protecting public health, within the Department of National Health and Welfare. In my opinion, the minister (Mr. Monteith) administers the affairs of his department with dispatch and efficiency.

Mr. Speaker, while studying this bill, we think of course of the tragedy that resulted in the birth of deformed babies, and especially of the mothers who have been the victims of that drug known under the general name of thalidomide. Thalidomide has been a source of great sorrow in more than one Canadian family. Therefore, I am sure that the people and the members of this house offer them publicly their sympathy, with the hope that better days are in store for them in a near future.

We must also congratulate the Minister of National Health and Welfare for taking immediate steps in order to give to the families which have suffered from the effects of that drug, some security, or, at least, some financial help which they have the right to expect. The minister shows once again that under his leadership his department is run in a competent, prompt and efficient manner.

The use of thalidomide has been a tragic experience in Canada, but especially in many countries of Europe.

You all know as well as I do, that absolutism in the field of drugs is a utopia and that secondary reactions of a drug are positively established only after continued clin-