

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

PRICE OF DRUGS—EFFECT OF AMENDING PATENT LAW

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. On innumerable occasions, both inside and outside the House, he said that the results of the patent legislation which he has brought forward will not mean increases in the price of prescription drugs. On Friday he said that there is a worst case scenario in which this could very well happen. Given that the generic companies have said that this legislation will increase their prices very substantially, and that the provinces have said it will add millions of dollars to the cost of their pharmacare programs, what information does he have on the actual increases that will take place after this legislation is passed?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the answers to all those questions are contained in my speech to the House during second reading on Bill C-22 last Thursday. I remind the Hon. Member that that is probably the reason for Citation 359(12) in *Beauchesne* which states that questions should not be asked about subjects that are currently a matter of debate before the House.

EXTENSION OF PATENT RIGHTS

Mr. David Orlikow (Winnipeg North): Mr. Speaker, the Minister also told journalists that the legislation was needed: "To quiet criticism from the U.S., Britain, France and other countries that Canada does not protect patents properly." Is the Government also extending the life of all patents from 17 to 20 years because it is afraid that we cannot have a patent policy of our own within the industrial property conventions we have already signed?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, again this is a good reason to get the Bill to committee. The effect of moving from 17 to 20 is no change. Twenty years comes into effect as soon as the patent is applied for, while previously it was after it was granted, which was three years. The 3 and 17 add up to 20, or no change.

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AIR CANADA

EMPLOYEES' PENSION PLAN—REQUEST FOR FULL ANNUAL REPORTS

Mr. Ross Belsher (Fraser Valley East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Transport. Many retired Air Canada employees are concerned about the lack of information being made available to them on the excess funds in their pension plan. Will the Minister allay their concerns by asking Air Canada to provide them with full annual reports of the contributions made to their pension fund and ensure that

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the full amounts of the surplus funds be used for enhancing their pensions?

Hon. John C. Crosbie (Minister of Transport): Mr. Speaker, there is an annual report on the Air Canada pension fund and that report is made available to the pension committee. The pension committee includes representatives of management, employee groups, and retired employees. The report is not distributed but the information from it is available to all groups through their representatives on the committee. If anyone has any difficulty getting the necessary information, if they contact me I will personally see that they get it.

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[Translation]

CONSUMER AFFAIRS

REQUEST THAT GOVERNMENT TABLE SECRET STUDIES ON DRUG PRICES

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. Over the weekend the Minister admitted what thousands of Canadians already know, namely that his Bill will have a direct impact on the price Canadians pay for drugs.

Since the Minister himself did acknowledge that it will have a very negative impact on the price of drugs in Canada, would he tell the House why he is not prepared to table forthwith the secret studies on drug prices? What does he have to hide?

• (1440)

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I am more than willing to have a complete discussion. That is why I am anxious for the debate to carry on so we can get the Bill to committee and have that discussion.

Ms. Copps: Mr. Speaker, the Minister for hoof and mouth disease on the weekend—

Some Hon. Members: Order.

Mr. Speaker: Order. The Hon. Member, I am sure, would not want to proceed in that way. I know she will probably withdraw the remark.

Ms. Copps: Yes, Mr. Speaker, I will withdraw the nomenclature.

MINISTER'S POSITION

Ms. Sheila Copps (Hamilton East): The Minister stated on the weekend that he was not going to give this information to the House because he did not want to provide "fodder" so the Opposition can "beat us over the head".