

Patent Act—Trade Marks Act

not likely to increase in view of the particular nature of the industry and of its integration into the international network.

Mr. Speaker, I would rather be inclined to think that the Drug Manufacturers Association is justified to fear a massive and free inflow of foreign products on the Canadian market. In that respect we support the bill in principle but we fear the ill effects of a too heavy inflow of imported products which would saturate our market.

If we compare, for instance, what happens in the drug industry with what has happened, and is still going on, in the footwear industry in Canada, we notice that the adoption of this bill will increase Canadian reliance upon foreign products and will kill—I did say “kill” Canadian initiative.

Mr. Speaker, we would be surprised to know how many Canadian shoe manufacturers have had to close shop because of massive imports or because the import market was poorly supervised by the federal government. We fear that the same phenomenon might recur—perhaps not within two, three, four, five or ten years—but over the long run and, then, we will face the problem which now confronts the footwear industry. I believe that this section of the act carries a hidden danger with regard to the import market. We must in fact watch our imports and not be content to talk only.

• (9:50 p.m.)

The control provided in the bill on imports of new products appears to me inadequate. The protection afforded Canadian products and manufacturers also leaves much to be desired. However, this represents an improvement on what was being done up to now, since we are facing a major problem due to the prohibitive cost of drugs. This was the main point on which I wanted to comment.

By the way, I greatly appreciated the remarks of the previous speaker, a member of the New Democratic party, who said that drugs must be within the means of anyone, whether rich or poor.

When one considers that some pills cost \$4.12 and retail at \$105, one can rightly wonder what is going on. When one sees a spread of from 194 to 491 per cent in tenders for the purchase of drugs, one has a right to ask questions. When hospitals pay \$1.95 for 100

[Mr. Fortin.]

capsules of prednisone, a cortisone-base chemical for the treatment of arthritis, as compared to \$17 paid by the druggist, one understands why the user has to pay more for those drugs.

Mr. Speaker, because of the high cost of drugs and their prohibitive retail price, for the Canadian consumer, this government not only repealed the sales tax, but also enacted another legislation to reduce the cost of drugs.

However, the former Minister of Finance (Mr. Sharp) revealed not so long ago—and I shall give the reference—that an unofficial survey indicated that the saving which resulted from the removal of the sale tax had reached only the wholesale and retail dealers without yet having benefitted the consumer. In other words, the Canadian government has taken steps for which he has to be commended, as they promote better competition. Indeed, it is very well known that the drug industry operates entirely on a monopolistic basis, because of the patent system. The government tabled some bills aimed at improving the situation; however those steps seem to favour the doctors, the druggists and the wholesale dealers, rather than the poor, the housewife or the head of a family who is disabled or has a diabetic condition.

At this stage, I would like to mention the case of one of my constituents, and I am sure that it happens in all ridings. This man is the father of eight children, he is an invalid, a diabetic and he had a stroke recently. After a stay in the hospital he went home, and he now receives a social welfare allowance of \$85 through patronage. But since he must pay \$50 a month for his medicine how can he make ends meet? It is absolutely impossible! Thus, considering those facts, the federal government has taken certain measures; it helped those who had money and not the needy.

Besides, the former Minister of Finance himself admits it because since he does not know whether the legislation has been effective or not, he uses his \$1.25 words, and I quote:

It is difficult for us to say definitely—

[*English*]

Mr. Speaker: Order. I regret to interrupt the hon. member. I see it is ten o'clock.