

Patent Act

In addition, we foresee possible cut-backs in existing health services and/or drug subsidy plans in some provinces.

On behalf of our organization, which has a membership in excess of 590,000 I wish to express disapproval to the Government's proposed course of action which may force Canadian taxpayers to pay more than they now do to subsidize the pharmaceutical industry.

In a small province like Nova Scotia, its people and its Government will have to get more money to fund their drug plan. We are a have-not province and it will either have to raise taxes or impose cut-backs. It will have to cut back in the health care sector on such things as jobs in our hospitals. The first to lose their jobs will be the cleaners and those people on the bottom. The doctors, senior Deputy Ministers and Assistant Deputy Ministers in the Department of Health will not lose their jobs, it is the jobs of the working men and women that will be cut in order to raise the money. Of course, the Government has confirmed this as a result of its offer of \$100 million on which the provinces can draw on a per capita basis.

The Minister of Health in the Province of Nova Scotia said that it will cost the taxpayers of that province up to an additional \$25 million a year.

I agree wholeheartedly with the Royal Canadian Legion of Canada that the price of drugs will rise and will affect citizens throughout Canada. Not only will it affect elderly Canadians who are on a pharmacare program, what will happen to the four million Canadians who do not belong to a pharmacare program? They will not be subsidized and will have to pay through the nose so that multinational corporations can enjoy a larger profit margin. Mr. Stacey of the Royal Canadian Legion wrote to the Minister. It is not just opposition Members of Parliament who are opposed to the Bill.

Another organization that has a great deal of credibility, like the Royal Canadian Legion, is opposed to the legislation. Does the Minister suggest that the United Church of Canada has it all wrong? Are all those who oppose Bill C-22 fear-mongers who are trying to perpetrate havoc and anguish among Canadians? Are they all wrong? Is that what the Minister is telling the United Church of Canada?

Let me quote what the United Church of Canada thinks about this legislation:

The Working Unit has reviewed the proposed changes and has concluded that they threaten the long-term best interests of Canadians. We urge you to abandon the proposals and to reaffirm Canada's commitment to providing security for Canadians who are sick and dependent on affordable drugs.

We are disturbed that this decision is being taken under pressure from external, political and corporate sources. We are also disturbed that the case for the changes to the Drug Patent Act is being made on grounds that give little assurance to Canadians that the values undergirding the country's health care system will be retained.

• (1550)

That letter was sent to the Clerk of the Legislative Committee on Bill C-22, and it was distributed to all Members of Parliament for their benefit. In fact, it was a copy of a letter sent to the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) on December 17, 1986.

Is the United Church of Canada wrong? Is the director of the office of the church, Dr. Bonnie M. Greene, a fearmonger?

Is she trying to perpetrate havoc in this country? I think not. I think the Minister's charges are totally unfounded and unwarranted and, from my perspective, they are not fair or reasonable at all.

The Cangene Corporation which came before our committee talked about patents. This is an interesting company because it is a Canadian company founded in 1984 by two experienced Canadian industrial genetic engineers. It said, and I quote:

—patent policy can also serve the purpose of furthering the Government's industrial policy with respect to a particular sector of the economy. This, of course, has been amply demonstrated, not only in the existing Patent Act, but also in the amendments proposed in Bill C-22 as they relate to the pharmaceutical industry. It is also amply demonstrated in that other nations have used variations in fundamental patent policy for the purpose of encouraging development and innovation in particular sectors of the economy.

That was one of the primary purposes of the 1969 Patent Act. Yes, it was to lower prices, but also to use this as a tool to develop our own Canadian pharmaceutical industry. Since that time we have seen the proliferation of generic companies which, I think, have added substantially to the providing of affordable drugs to Canadians from coast to coast.

Cangene was very concerned about the proposed changes to the Canadian Patent Act, and I quote from page 2 of its brief:

In this brief we will provide a rationale for the role patents should play in the development of a Canadian-owned genetically based pharmaceutical industry, and explain why Canada should not permit or encourage, as a matter of policy, the granting of patents on natural products per se, but rather on the real advance illustrating the invention; namely, the biotechnology process method utilized in the production and manufacture of the natural product already existing in nature.

This is another Canadian company, incorporated under the laws of this country, and doing rather well financially, I might add, which is also opposed to Bill C-22 for all of the reasons I have already stated.

In September of 1986, when the Government was in the process of reintroducing the Bill, it attempted to bring forward on June 30, 1986, a number of national organizations, such as the Canadian Council on Social Development, the Canadian Health Coalition, the Catholic Health Association of Canada, the Federal Superannuates National Association, the Inter Pares/Women's Health Interaction, the National Action Committee on the Status of Women, the National Pensioners and Senior Citizens Federation, the President of the National Council of Women of Canada, The National Anti-Poverty Organization, the Health Action International-Canada, the President of the Consumers' Association of Canada, the President of the Canadian Labour Congress and the Chair of the Canadian Federation of University Women. They all signed a letter addressed to the Prime Minister requesting that he not proceed with the drug Bill.

All of these agencies are national in scope. Professional people work with these organizations. They have all had an opportunity to review and examine the legislation and thereafter to make their views known. They have let it be known to parliamentarians, to government Members as well as to members of the Opposition, that they are opposed to Bill