

Oral Questions

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

COMMITTEE PROCEEDINGS—HEARING OF WITNESSES

An Hon. Member: Boy wonder.

Mr. Beatty: Here again, we get a case, Mr. Speaker, where a Member of the New Democratic Party poses a question and then the great believers in democracy try to shout down somebody giving a response.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Beatty: If they would listen, Mr. Speaker,—

Ms. Jewett: I am listening.

Mr. Beatty: The next thing you know they will ask that we send the Coast Guard to Washington for gunboat diplomacy too.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

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ENVIRONMENTAL AFFAIRS

CLEAN-UP OF NIAGARA RIVER AND LAKE ONTARIO

Mr. Alan Redway (York East): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of the Environment. Last week the Minister was quoted as saying that there was a good chance of Canada reaching an agreement with the United States this week for a clean-up of the Niagara River and Lake Ontario. The week is growing shorter, Mr. Speaker. Would the Minister please advise the House on a scale of one to ten what the chances are of reaching an agreement this week and whether that agreement will include a clean-up of the chemical dumps on the American side of the Niagara River?

Hon. Tom McMillan (Minister of the Environment): Mr. Speaker, pollution in the Niagara River is of vital concern to the Government of Canada. Something like 4.5 million Canadians derive their drinking water from that source into which something like a tonne to nine tonnes of highly toxic substances are discharged daily. Tomorrow, in Toronto, there will be an international conference bringing together top experts from around the world to discuss the matter, including the question of excavation along the American side, given that 90 per cent of the toxins are from the United States.

In connection with the conference, I am pleased to tell the Hon. Member and the House that there will be a signing of an international accord by Canada and the United States, the Government of New York and the Government of Ontario, which *The Toronto Star*, not given to hyperbole in describing the wonderful things that the Government of Canada is doing, has described as a breakthrough. I cannot tell the Hon. Member anything more than that before the signing, but I think he will share *The Toronto Star's* high esteem.

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs. He will realize that the Prime Minister has been attempting to foster what he says is better relationships with the United States. Why has the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs issued a directive to Members serving on the legislative committee examining Bill C-22 to prohibit witnesses from the United States, namely, senior citizens' organizations and other groups from appearing and giving testimony on a piece of legislation which has far-reaching ramifications for Canadians from coast to coast?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, I issued no such directive. The committee is in charge of its own proceedings. As the Hon. Member indicated at the end of his question, this is legislation which has tremendous impact for Canadians from coast to coast. I find it somewhat surprising that the Liberal Party is suggesting that we should invite American congressmen, American lobbyists, and American representatives of the drug industry to come to Canada to tell us how to frame our law. I would much rather talk to Judy Erola.

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

MINISTER'S POSITION

Mr. Dave Dingwall (Cape Breton—East Richmond): Mr. Speaker, I have a supplementary question for the same Minister. Why is the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs afraid to hear representations from various individuals and organizations, such as the United States chairman of the Generic Pharmaceutical Industry Association? What does he have to hide? Why can we not have those witnesses come before the committee, and give testimony so that Canadians can see the deplorable situation in the United States which this Government is trying to copy?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): There is nothing to hide, Mr. Speaker. The legislation is there. If it is looked at objectively by Hon. Members they will see that it is very beneficial to Canadians. It will improve health care for Canadians, create more research jobs for Canadians, and it will enable us to participate in the exciting biotechnologies. Again, I wonder why the Liberal Party seems to think that you have to go to Washington to find out what we should do here in Canada for Canadians.