

Patent Act—Trade Marks Act

With the passage of Bill C-102, competitors who barely have a telephone and employ perhaps a salesman could put on the market imported products soon after their development, knowing that the government will grant them a temporary license less than six months after the issuance of a patent. I expect that companies of pharmaceutical products now manufacturing their products will also obtain licences. Then, instead of plants and laboratories of pharmaceutical products, we will have warehouses, as it often occurs in several Canadian industries.

If the governmental program is really successful, it is obvious that the industry will have to close its research laboratories in Canada and transfer its manufactures in countries where salaries and manufacturing cost are comparable to those of imported products.

While nearly all the nations in the western world, which use advanced technology, are endeavouring to find fair means for providing pharmaceutical services required by adequate welfare programs, within competitive international patent systems, our government seems determined to endanger the very existence of that industry.

Bill C-102 aims only at cutting the price of drugs to the utmost. What would happen, supposing our pharmaceutical industry was destroyed, our research laboratories were eliminated, and thousands of workers were dismissed, if this bill failed, as did the suppression of the 12 per cent tax?

There are other very important points. We should remember that druggists who sell to the consumers do not come in any way under the jurisdiction of the federal government.

In my opinion, we should have come to some agreement with the provincial governments before introducing this bill. I am convinced that there are other ways to get the desired result, without taking the risk of ruining our drug industry and I hope I will have the opportunity to deal with that within the committee.

Before concluding my comments, Mr. Speaker, allow me to quote the report of the special committee of the House on the cost and prices of pharmaceutical products, commonly called the Harley report. Sub-section 1 of Chapter II gives the basic principles, and I quote:

—your Committee remained fully conscious that its responsibilities in fact exceed those of the Commissions in that the Committee's conclusions must be such that any of its recommendations, if adopted—

Here is a very important excerpt, and I quote:

—should continue to maintain a proper balance between industry and consumer and take into consideration the importance of continued and increased scientific research in Canada.

● (9:50 p.m.)

Mr. René Matte (Champlain): Mr. Speaker, I shall first take the liberty of recalling the remarks made by the hon. member for Lotbinière (Mr. Fortin) regarding this bill. In my opinion, he is one of the few who have outlined the real problem. All possible means are used to reduce the price of drugs at the risk of jeopardizing Canadian pharmaceutical firms.

As the hon. member for Lotbinière pointed out consideration must be given to the other aspect of the problem, that is to give the taxpayer enough money to enable him to buy those products. If their price is exorbitant because it is impossible to do otherwise on account of their nature, it is obvious that the best solution is to enable people to buy them since, as the hon. member also pointed out, it must be said that, as far as health is concerned, nobody can assume control and declare that he will forever be exempted from having to use drugs.

There exists therefore an innate right to drugs and that is why we should think more often of giving people the means to get them easily. That should be made extremely easy because no distinction must be made between the rich and the poor, the individual from the East or the West, the North or the South. Everybody has the indefeasible right to get proper medical care.

When the minister brought his bill before us on October 17 last, he set up the various stages in connection with it. He stated that the first step had been taken towards reducing prices by removing the sales tax on drugs.

Of course, this legislation was an improvement, but God knows that when one takes a walk among our people the only topic of conversation when one talks about social welfare and national health is always the same, namely that these products are out of reach. Of course removing the sales tax was a step forward, but really that hardly helped the customer. Therefore, this first stage did not produce any significant result and the reduction of the customs tariff from 20 to 15 per cent as well as the limitation of the anti-dumping duty to imported drugs had of