

Patent Act

Mr. Andre: I think the Leader of the Opposition knows of whom I speak.

Mr. Nystrom: Not Nelson and not me.

Mr. Andre: Deep down I am not even sure about Nelson. He never struck me as the kind of guy who would want to legalize piracy. I would hate to have my mind changed. I understand that he has certain responsibilities to the hoard behind him.

Mr. Young: I'm a hoard? Some hoard.

Mr. Andre: I am sure that deep in his soul he understands the fundamental immorality of piracy and would not defend that position.

There are four reasons for what we are doing. We must respect the principle of intellectual property. It does not matter whether we are dealing with a book, a poem, a song or a drug. We must respect that and any country which does not must be ashamed. Second, we cannot deal ourselves out of research and development in this important area and particularly in biotechnology. That is just too important an area to deal ourselves out as we are doing without this Bill. Third, there is no question that we have international obligations which must be honoured. If we want to be treated as a first-class nation, as a member of G-7, we must respect the rules of that group, one of which is that you do not pirate each other's inventions. Fourth, and this is important for the health care of Canadians, we cannot tell Canadians that we will not do research into cystic fibrosis, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Alzheimer's, AIDS and cancer because we are concerned that the generic companies will not be able to come on as quickly. We cannot responsibly tell Canadians that that research is unimportant. We need to have those 3,000 scientists working for the health and well-being of Canadians. We are doing this in a way that protects the consumers.

● (1440)

The Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition says that this will be on the backs of the elderly, the sick, the lame and those in nursing homes. He described everyone who is covered by a drug plan. So how will it affect them? If he is worried about the funding of the drug plan, I have pointed out and am willing to show him in committee that his cost projections are nonsense. If he had done in 1969 what we are doing now, Canadians would be saving more money today than they are under this scheme.

I am pleased that we are finally getting past this stage so that we can study the legislation clause by clause in committee as opposed to Question Period, which is not really an appropriate or intelligent forum, with everyone gesticulating for the benefit of the television cameras, to communicate information.

Let us get the Bill to committee and, while it may be too late, I ask the Opposition to try to keep an open mind and realize that this is a good Bill that is good for Canada. If they do they will support it.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) has outlined his points of view on this important piece of legislation. As well, he commented on the views expressed by others, most recently, the Leader of the Official Opposition (Mr. Turner).

This is obviously a controversial piece of legislation, about which there are conflicting views and conflicting evidence. Yet the Minister says that it is good for Canada and good for Canadians and that everyone will enthusiastically agree with the Bill once the facts are on the table.

This whole matter will soon be referred to the appropriate committee that will hear witnesses in its clause-by-clause examination of the Bill. Given his confidence in this Bill, will the Minister consider giving the appropriate committee permission to hold hearings in some places other than Ottawa so that it will be easier for Canadian individuals or groups to have access as witnesses to present their views to the committee? Will he be open-minded to that proposal?

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I did not participate in the negotiations but my understanding is that offers were made to travel to four cities; one in the east, one in the west, and two in the centre. Offers were made to provide ample time for all of those committee hearings in exchange for some commitment that the New Democratic Party would not use dilatory tactics at report stage and third reading stage. Those very reasonable offers were turned down by the New Democratic Party. Now they are coming back and trying to negotiate in another forum. They had their chance and should have been reasonable at that point in time.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I have a short supplementary question. I do not imagine that the Minister wishes to inadvertently mislead the House and the people of Canada. According to my recollection, I believe that the proposal was indeed to travel to some communities on the understanding that there would be an agreement that members of the Opposition would have a limited opportunity to speak and that the Government would be in a position to predict the exact hour that the Bill would be terminated. That was the arrangement. To suggest that the New Democrats were not prepared to co-operate enthusiastically at all stages of this Bill is inappropriate and incorrect. I just wanted to clarify that for the Minister's sake.

Mr. Andre: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that he did so. In case the Hon. Member has forgotten, I want to clarify that on November 6 when I extended the courtesy to the opposition Parties of saying that I would be introducing the Bill at first reading that day, they used the opportunity to filibuster and for the first time in Canadian history tried to deny first reading of the Bill. They did that for two days, setting a dreadful parliamentary precedent of trying to prevent the introduction of a Bill. For the House Leader of the New Democratic Party to turn around and say that they were being reasonable flies in the face of the facts.