

Senator Frith: This is Question Period, senator. The facts I put on the record are facts from your beloved prices review board. These facts are on the record. I am now asking about NAFTA and trade agreements. I know that your attention span is limited, senator, but just try to keep up.

Senator Pryor went on to add:

This system has served Canadian citizens extremely well in reducing launch prices for new drugs and containing drug inflation.

I ask the Leader of the Government, is the government contemplating changes to NAFTA's pharmaceutical provisions in order to head us in the direction that the U.S. seems to be going, namely to a compulsory licensing patent system being permitted by NAFTA?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, there are so many hypotheses in that question that it would be impossible to give an answer to it. Even assuming all the hypotheses were true about the United States and so forth, the answer to the question would be in the negative.

PATENTED MEDICINE PRICES REVIEW BOARD—STATUS OF PRICE-CONTROL GUIDELINES

Hon. M. Lorne Bonnell: I notice in the *Globe and Mail* article as well that the prices review board found that:

Preliminary figures show an overall drug price increase of 2.6 per cent, compared with an inflation rate of 1.5 per cent.

This finding, too, has prompted the review board to propose changing its price-control guidelines.

Does the minister know if the review board has changed its guidelines?

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I can tell the honourable senator that those guidelines are under discussion now among the board, the provinces, the industry, and other interested parties. However, I am not aware that the guidelines have been changed.

Senator Bonnell: Would the minister table in the Senate the report of the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board which provided those statistics, and would he also table in the Senate the guidelines when they are changed concerning price review?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, as I indicated earlier, I will take that matter up with the Minister of National Health and Welfare.

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): Before I come to my specific question of the

minister, I want to clarify something. Did I understand him correctly to say, in reply to questions from my colleague, the leader of our group, that he had not read the *Globe and Mail* article?

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I have not read anything in the *Globe and Mail* today. I have just not had the opportunity.

Senator Molgat: I am frankly surprised that the minister's staff would not bring to his attention a matter as important as this one, relating very seriously to a bill which we passed in this house some time ago. I am really amazed that the minister's briefings would not encompass such important matters. Perhaps he should consider some change in staff.

Some Hon. Senators: Oh! Oh!

Senator Molgat: Then who is right, his staff or the minister? Did his staff inform him and he is now telling us something different? I would like to know what his staff told him. He might clear that up.

GOVERNMENT EXPENDITURES RESTRAINT BILL,
1993 NO. 2

REQUEST FOR POLLING RESULTS

Hon. Gildas L. Molgat (Deputy Leader of the Opposition): My question to the Leader of the Government is with regard to some surveys that he agreed to supply to us with respect to Bill C-113. Now that Bill C-113 has been referred to committee, when might we expect those surveys? He promised them last week.

Hon. Lowell Murray (Leader of the Government): Honourable senators, I sent an inquiry forward some time ago, after the honourable senator asked his question. I will look into it.

Senator Molgat: I wish to point out that this matter is rather urgent, in view of the fact that the bill is now before us. My honourable friend said that he would furnish us with those surveys, in the hope that they would assist us to make up our minds on the bill. If I had doubts about the bill, I certainly would like the surveys to assist me.

• (1400)

Senator Murray: Honourable senators, I do not have the question and answer before me, as the honourable senator does. As I recall, there were some public opinion research studies that had been the subject of access to information requests that were already in the public domain, and I was under the impression my honourable friend had those. He asked a question about whether any other studies were done and I undertook to look into that.