

● (1220)

The policy adopted in 1969, which the Government is trying to change today, did not come about by accident. It came about as a result of great concerns expressed by Canadians about the high cost of drugs. It also came about as a result of no less than four studies during the 1960s, including the last one which was a study by a House of Commons committee comprised of members from all sides of the House. Canadians were paying such high prices for drugs, the committee concluded, because the multinational corporations enjoyed a monopoly on drug pricing, which monopoly was driving up prices and keeping them up.

What the Government of the day decided to do, based on the recommendations from these four major studies, was to remove patent protection from drugs to allow Canadian generic manufacturers to enter the field and copy high-priced drugs, thus providing Canadians with lower priced drugs.

Since 1969, as a result of pressure from the pharmaceutical industry, no less than another four studies were conducted into Canada's policy. Everyone concluded that Canada's policy was a correct one. It was certainly of great benefit to Canadian consumers. The last study, which was one of the most major examinations of Canada's policy respecting the Patent Act and also a major investigation into the pharmaceutical industry not only in Canada but world-wide, was conducted by Professor Harry Eastman. Professor Eastman tabled his report in the House of Commons in 1985 and concluded a number of things. In the most recent figures available to him he clearly showed that in 1983 alone Canadians saved \$211 million as a result of Canada's policy. He made some minor recommendations to keep the multinational drug companies happy. In essence, he said that Canada's policy was fine and it should not be changed.

But what did this Government do, Mr. Speaker? Because the pharmaceutical companies could not persuade Governments since 1969 to change Canada's policy, they went after Ronnie Reagan in the United States. Ronnie Reagan listened to them, came to Canada and said to our Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney) "We want that policy changed". That is exactly what the Government did. It changed the policy, not because it is in Canada's interest, not because it is in Canadian consumers interests but because it is in Ronnie Reagan's interest and the drug companies based in the United States.

As a result of that change in policy, Mr. Speaker, over the next 10 years alone it is estimated that it will cost Canadian consumers an additional \$4.3 billion in increased drug prices because Ronnie Reagan asked the Government to change policy.

Apart from what the Government is doing with the present piece of legislation, we are changing a policy because the Americans are demanding that we change the policy and I find that terribly offensive. It is offensive to me as a Canadian, and I think most Canadians across the country find it equally as

### *Softwood Lumber Products Export Charge Act*

offensive. If the Government does not change its course and its way of thinking as it negotiates with people in the United States on free trade, we will find what the Prime Minister himself said when he was seeking the leadership of the Conservative Party speaking about free trade, that "When you climb into bed with an elephant and you are a mouse, when that elephant rolls over, the mouse is likely to get crushed". That is exactly what will happen in these negotiations unless the crew over there smartens up.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Alfonso Gagliano (Saint-Léonard—Anjou):** Mr. Speaker, I also wish to rise in this debate on Bill C-37, an Act respecting the imposition of a charge on the export of certain softwood lumber products.

First, I would like to deal with the motion which aims at closing the debate before all parliamentarians have been able to express their views on this very important matter which threatens the very existence of Canada. There are only 70 members in the Opposition while the Government has 210 members. I therefore do not understand why there should be such a motion to close the debate instead of letting it continue normally.

Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, that is not what is happening. The strategy of this Conservative Government is to reduce the length of debates both in the House and in committee, and we had a very clear example of it this morning. In the Committee on Government Operations, a motion was moved to call back Canada Post before the committee, but the chairman ruled the motion out of order because a witness was scheduled to appear. Then, there was an agreement to hear the witness before the debate on the motion, but later on, when time came for debate, there was not a single Conservative member left in the committee and it had to adjourn because of a lack of quorum.

Such is the strategy used by the Government so that Canadians will be unable to see how it is selling out Canada.

Mr. Speaker, we have to remember that the two major objectives of the Canadian Confederation were to protect sovereignty and deliver the mail. These two objectives are being ignored by this Government. The agreement under consideration in the House completely ignores Canadian sovereignty, and since November 5, when we learned about the postal plan of the Government, the mail delivery service in Canada has suffered tremendously, in both rural and urban areas.

However, this debate deals with Bill C-37 and there will be other opportunities to contribute to this other debate which is now going on throughout Canada, and I hope that we shall have such an opportunity in this House.

Let us go back to the question of sovereignty, Mr. Speaker. I would like to dwell on that, because representing as I do an urban area my constituents are not that much interested in the technical problems behind such an agreement.