

Patent Act

The legislation that was passed in 1969 had a tremendously important effect on Canadians. The drugs produced by generic companies were sold to consumers at the retail level at prices that were usually half or less the prices paid for brand name drugs.

A few years ago when the former Liberal Government was in power, the multinational drug companies, which had always opposed the legislation because they felt it interfered with their very substantial profits, put pressure on the then Government and persuaded the then Minister, the Hon. Member for Papineau (Mr. Ouellet), to appoint Professor Eastman, a professor from the University of Toronto, to study the organization of the industry and its profits and to make recommendations. Those recommendations were not tabled in the House until after the Liberal Government was defeated and the present Conservative Government was in power.

The legislation that is before us bears little resemblance to the recommendations made by Professor Eastman. Professor Eastman found that the companies were making very substantial profits, among the highest profits made by any industry in Canada. Professor Eastman told us that in 1983, the last year for which he had figures, Canadians saved \$211 million as a result of the competition to multinational drug companies provided by generic companies. The professor suggested ways in which he felt the law, which had been enacted in 1969, could be amended so that multinational companies would have a little more protection but the consumers would not have to pay exorbitant prices. Those recommendations of Professor Eastman have all been virtually ignored by the Government as demonstrated in this legislation.

● (1650)

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a very important point of order. After the Speaker recognized that the Dome takeover was important enough to grant an emergency debate in the House of Commons, the Committee on Energy, Mines and Resources decided it was appropriate to summon before it as witnesses the Chairman of Dome and the President of Amoco. We learned moments ago that the committee has decided to reverse that decision and not hold hearings with these two individuals as witnesses.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): Order. In view of the fact that this subject matter is not before the Chamber, I do not think I can accept this as a point of order. The Hon. Member could give written notice to the Speaker and raise it as the first item of business tomorrow. However, I cannot permit this particular point of order in the House at this time.

Mr. Riis: Mr. Speaker, I accept your judgment on this. I was only asking to serve notice with regard to a very special section of *Beauchesne's Parliamentary Rules and Forms*. I refer to section—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I know exactly which chapter and verse the Member is going to quote. If the Member wishes to serve notice, he should do so to the Speaker and we can carry on with debate today.

Mr. Riis: I appreciate your comments, Mr. Speaker. For clarification, do I take it that you would entertain a motion that the House summon to the bar various witnesses? Are you recommending that a resolution to that effect be put forward tomorrow?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): The Speaker will have to entertain the point of order and then make a ruling accordingly.

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Mr. Speaker, would the Chair be so kind as to give a clarification? The Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis) left the impression in my mind that the Speaker might be in agreement with such a motion. I hope that is not the—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Paproski): I cannot read the Speaker's mind. I cannot make a decision on the point of the Hon. Member for Kamloops—Shuswap (Mr. Riis), nor can I make one on what the Hon. Minister has just said. The Chair will decide when the Hon. Member submits a written request. The Hon. Member for Winnipeg North (Mr. Orlikow) has the floor.

Mr. Orlikow: Mr. Speaker, the proposal of the Government as contained in this Bill was greeted with almost unanimous opposition by a host of groups from across the country which wrote to, telephoned, and visited Members of Parliament. Those positions were rejected by the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs (Mr. Andre) who, in innumerable speeches, claimed that there was little opposition to this Bill and that the people who opposed it did not know what they were talking about and had not looked at the facts.

In debate on this Bill at second reading stage the Minister, who believed that members of the Opposition were holding the Bill up unnecessarily, argued that the Bill should be allowed to go to committee where all the witnesses would be heard and all the evidence would be seen. At almost the first meeting of the committee a government Member moved time allocation.

The result was that only a small fraction of the groups which wanted to testify and register their opinions on the Bill were allowed to do so. The time allocated to each group was limited to 45 minutes. The committee met five times a week and heard three delegations at each meeting. In the nearly 25 years that I have been in this House I have never seen a committee restrict discussion in the way in which this committee did.

When the Bill returned to the House at report stage, a motion was moved that debate at report stage be limited to one day and at third reading stage to two days. This motion, of course, passed as a result of the Government's large majority.