

Patent Act—Trade Marks Act

he intended to apply the legislation so as to avoid all the mistakes which were detected. That is why we moved our amendments.

It is unfortunate that we sometimes have to take drugs. We therefore wanted at all costs to obtain the assurance that the drugs would comply with certain standards of quality.

The problem affects everyone today, particularly in our North American society where life is so hectic that, much too often, we use drugs.

Publicity must not encourage the use of those products, as some amendments seemed to suggest, and they should be used only under doctors' prescriptions.

If the minister is serious in his intention to have the legislation fully enforced, and to favor the consumer, we hope that the bill will help solve the problem of exorbitant drug prices.

As this is an area where mediocrity cannot be tolerated, the quality of the products is of the utmost importance and it must be on a par with reasonable prices, for that is the purpose of the bill, and we hope that the minister will succeed in this endeavour.

It must also be ascertained that the importance of the Canadian drug industry is not impaired in favour of foreign manufacturers.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Rose (Fraser Valley West): Mr. Speaker, I think this debate is an indication that there is a great interest on the part of members in all parts of this house in this bill. My colleagues have said over and over during this debate that we support Bill C-102. We congratulate the minister for bringing it forward. We believe, however, that it is a timid piece of legislation and that ultimately it will not do a great deal to limit the scope of the extortionist tactics carried on by the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association of Canada. Many Canadians, and I refer specifically to the poor and the elderly, can scarcely afford drugs at cost let alone at the excessive rates imposed on them because of the monopoly position enjoyed by the brand name drug manufacturers or, as they prefer to be known, the ethical drug manufacturers.

These so-called ethical drug companies imply by their employment of that term that any drug manufacturer that does not belong to their chummy little international club is by exclusion unethical. To the P.M.A.C., "unethical" usually means price cutting and they maintain a constant vigilance for any threat to their society which would involve price

cutting as it relates to the patent companies. We maintain that to be sick is tragedy enough, but that to be robbed in addition is a crime against which our government should protect us.

I, and others, have said that this bill will do very little to bring down the cost of prescription drugs to the Canadian public. But Canada is not the only country which has had to face this issue. It might be well to note some of the problems other countries have had and the steps they are contemplating to fight the drug cartel.

On August 30, 1968 the U.S. task force on prescription drugs published its second report in which it calls for a drastic overhaul of the existing system of drug merchandising and prescription dispensing. The report scored the molecular manipulation of existing drugs—the "me too" drugs—which is called research but which in reality is an elaborate, wasteful exercise undertaken in order to win a new patent or a renewed patent. The task force refuted the allegation by the industry that prescription drug costs had been dropping and noted that this industry is skilled in introducing new costly products to replace cheap ones.

Finally, the United States report goes to the social nub of the problem, the elderly segment of society, and recommends the following:

We find therefore, that the requirements for appropriate prescription drug therapy by the elderly are very great—far greater, in fact, than those of any other group—and that many elderly men and women are now unable to meet these needs with their limited incomes, savings or present insurance coverage. Their inability to afford the drugs they require may well be reflected in needless sickness and disability, unemployment and costly hospitalization which could have been prevented by adequate out-of-hospital treatment.

• (3:10 p.m.)

If this is a true reflection of the drug scene in the United States and reflects their concern, we in Canada should be equally or more concerned since we have a similar proportion of elderly citizens who are affected, and, if anything, our drug prices are reputed to be higher.

What is the story in Britain? I am afraid it is the old one of a privileged manufacturing position and high level gouging of the public for needed prescriptions of brand name drugs. A government probe into the drug industry there, under a commission headed by Lord Sainsbury, proposed drastic controls