

ORAL QUESTION PERIOD

[English]

PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

PRICE OF DRUGS—CANADA-UNITED STATES TRADE NEGOTIATIONS INQUIRY

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Prime Minister. It concerns the Government's cave-in to the United States on the question of drug prices. It has used the sick and elderly as a pawn in order to maintain the currency of the free trade negotiations with the United States. Was it not enough to attempt to deindex pensions for our older people? Was it not enough to impose taxes on non-prescription drugs? Why must the weak and the elderly be used as pawns in order to maintain these negotiations with the United States?

● (1415)

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the previous Liberal Government in June, 1983, announced, as government policy, the decision to restore patent protection for drugs. The Hon. Member for Papineau was the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs at the time. If the Right Hon. Leader of the Opposition is now saying this has something to do with trade talks, perhaps he can enlighten us as to what trade talks the previous Liberal Government had under way at that time?

[Translation]

THE SICK—GOVERNMENT POSITION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): Mr. Speaker, chief American negotiator Clayton Yeutter listed drug manufacturing companies among the five priorities of the United States. Those are the answers.

My question is this, Mr. Speaker: Abandoning our lumber industry was bad enough, so why abandon sick Canadians now just to salvage these negotiations with the United States?

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, if the right hon. gentleman believes we should have research and development in this country, and if he believes that the 8,000 jobs the *Le Devoir Economique* estimates for Montreal alone are something we should disregard because some mischievous people might make this false association between what we are doing in Canada, for Canada's benefit, and the trade talks, he is entitled to his point of view, but it is not a view shared by this Government, nor by anyone who has the welfare of our young scientists in mind.

Mr. Turner: The Prime Minister, I notice, is not answering these questions.

Oral Questions

COST OF MEDICATION

Right Hon. John N. Turner (Leader of the Opposition): We may have been prepared to accept independent inquiry recommendations, but the Government has gone far beyond that. The Government went further at the risk of our sick and our elderly. What about the price of heart medication, arthritic pills, antibiotics—just to satisfy the American Government on this particular issue?

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, for one thing, those pills the right hon. gentleman is talking about, those drugs, will remain on the market. The legislation does not affect them one little bit. The hon. gentleman ought to examine the Bill before making those kinds of judgments.

Second, the people he talked about are covered by drug plans. Over 85 per cent of Canadians are covered 100 per cent by drug plans.

Mr. Gauthier: Who pays for that?

Mr. Andre: Whatever cost there might be in terms of drug plans will be way more than offset by the thousands of jobs, high-tech jobs in biotechnology, which will be generated.

Mr. Gauthier: We have heard that before.

Mr. Andre: Any reasonable person will reach a conclusion that this is a good package.

[Translation]

INQUIRY CONCERNING DEMAND FOR LEGISLATION

Mrs. Thérèse Killens (Saint-Michel—Ahuntsic): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs.

The provinces, retired Canadians, welfare recipients, the generic drug industry and the Consumers' Association of Canada have all spoken against the Government's proposed drug patents policy.

My question is quite simple: Who is in favour of this legislation which could prove to be very costly to ailing men and women throughout Canada?

[English]

Hon. Harvie Andre (Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): Mr. Speaker, for one, the Government of Quebec, because under the Liberal and PQ Governments there were unanimous resolutions passed in the National Assembly asking the federal Government to do what we are doing.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!

Mr. Andre: And I repeat if one examines the legislation and the program, one will not be able to substantiate the accusation that drug prices are going to rise.

Mr. Broadbent: Oh?