

Patent Act—Trade Marks Act

to benefit mankind. I do not see why Canada should not specialize in the manufacture and distribution of drugs. I agree that it is necessary to make safe drugs, and possibly we could specialize in the manufacture of a selected number of drugs. The value of a Crown corporation is that it exists to serve people. I do not care whether companies in the drug field come under private or public ownership.

• (3:30 p.m.)

I have no hang-up about public ownership or private ownership. I do not think there is intrinsically any greater merit in one or the other. That is not my argument. It is not a philosophical argument I am making. The argument I am making is that a crown corporation would be more effective for serving the needs of the people of the country. It would be more responsive because it would be answerable to the people of the country in the way that these major international drug corporations are not. Surely, this must be the ultimate test of the value of an organization, the test of its responsiveness to the needs of people.

Therefore, Mr. Speaker, because the drug companies have failed the people of the country, because they have been preoccupied with their own interests, there is a vital need for the establishment of a responsive instrument, a crown corporation, for the manufacture and distribution of drugs.

Mr. Ray Perrault (Burnaby-Seymour): Mr. Speaker, two developments were predictable this afternoon. First of all our friends to the far left took credit for this legislation. Since 1933 the socialist party in this country has taken credit for almost everything that has happened in Canada with the possible exception of motherhood, and they made their contribution in that area. Before I leave this first point, may I say there has never been any doubt at any time that it was the intention of the government to proceed with this legislation after June 25 last year. This has always been enshrined in Liberal belief and policy. It did not require the pushing of any group in this house in order to inspire Liberal members to introduce this legislation again.

The other predictable development this afternoon was that our political medicine friends to the far left again suggested that the universal snake oil that cures everything is nationalization or the establishment of a Crown corporation. This medicine has been

splashed all over the country since the formation of that party and really, Mr. Speaker, it is impossible to simplify great national problems by merely suggesting that we nationalize an industry or establish a crown corporation. That bottle of medicine should be labelled "Dangerous if taken internally," certainly for some maladies. At the same time, Mr. Speaker, I think the government members are gratified that there is such a measure of support, at least on the part of some members in opposition, for the legislation that is before us.

I rise in support of this measure and I commend the responsible minister for his unswerving determination to fight the excessively high cost of drugs in this country and his determination to bring on this legislation early in the new year. Undoubtedly, this bill is going to encounter opposition in many sectors of Canada. Certain sectors of the community are going to suggest that there are dangers inherent in this legislation, dangers to health, dangers to freedom, dangers to research, but all of these considerations are outweighed by the advantages of this proposal.

There will be opposition from those who will provide frightening descriptions of a vital drug industry in ruins. There will be opposition from those who profess to be clairvoyant. They give us the picture of research scientists leaving Canada by the thousands, thus finishing research in this country. There will be opposition, some I am afraid by well-heeled lobbyists, who will assert that free enterprise is in peril and that somehow, if the government acts to protect the consumer of Canada in this way, we are going to do irreparable damage to the system.

One of the objects of the measure before us is to relax patent protection, as we know it, in order to inject more competition into the drug industry in Canada. It is hoped that this will bring down prices. The government is not suggesting price control; it is not suggesting nationalization. But this is the type of thing which is now being threatened in Sweden. Some hon. members may be aware of the fact that the Swedish government states it may nationalize the country's pharmacies to reduce the cost of drugs in that country, yet the Canadian prices of eight popular drugs are estimated to be 86 per cent higher than the prices of those drugs in Sweden. So, the government of this country is acting to make sure the Canadian consumers are not paying an excessive amount for vital drugs.