

Patent Act—Trade Marks Act

cost of drugs in his introductory speech, in which he stated that Canadians were at a disadvantage. I am sure that all those who have heard that speech have understood that the same comparison would apply to virtually all the other commodities which we manufacture in Canada, inasmuch as the comparison is made on an official international basis of exchange. The only way to make a decent comparison would be to base it on the relative purchasing power.

But to go back to the speech of the Minister. As an example, he gave a list of nine drugs, which would be enough to warrant the repeal of all patents on drugs in Canada. Besides, the hon. member for Simcoe North (Mr. Rynard) mentioned it last week. The patents on four of those drugs are about to expire, if they have not expired yet. The patent on three other drugs will end within a few years, and only two will be protected by a patent for some years to come.

● (9:40 p.m.)

I am also told that the Canadian prices referred to in the same speech are quite higher than the most favourable prices charged now to Canadian pharmacists.

I wish to say again that I favour low-priced drugs as long as there is a guarantee that the quality of the drug will not be reduced, that the proceedings covering the importation of drugs will not jeopardize opportunities for new discoveries in Canada, that research and manufacturing facilities will be used at their fullest capacity and that there will be an objective and complete appraisal of the importance of industrial patents in Canada.

The hon. minister pointed out that 95 per cent of Canadian patents belong to foreign countries. He places Canada in such a situation that she has nothing to do but to pick up the ball and go home if she thinks she has no chance whatsoever to win the game. The government should act in this field. Why not set up a nationwide organization aimed at enhancing industrial research?

The former minister of Industry said that our country's objective for research and development should be 4 per cent of our gross national product. How could we attain such a goal? By eliminating substantial facilities for drug research in Canada? By ignoring and disregarding the most important incentive to research? By trying to dismantle the most important machineries for the international

[Mr. Emard.]

sharing of technological advances to be found in the domestic patents system?

I admit that we must provide pharmaceutical products at fair and reasonable prices, but I do not think the legislation proposed but the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs will bring the expected results.

I am forced to believe the Canadian Medical Association when its representatives tell us their great concern that the legislation will open the way to drugs of which the security and effectiveness will not always be up to the quality standards that Canadian citizens are entitled to.

I must take the word of experts in international research who draw our attention to the most important part played by the patent system in world trade.

I am most interested in the report prepared by the Economic Council of Canada on the importance of industrial patents in the Canadian industry. Since the report is to be released at the end of February, why not wait for it?

I am also interested to learn the results of the study that the Medical Research Council has performed on the industrial pharmaceuticals in Canada.

Besides, I would like to know when the Department of National Health and Welfare will establish a selective assistance regarding drugs for the benefit of those who need them most, such as old people who rely on a small allowance and who are chronically ill, and all the other citizens who are poor and who need drugs badly.

The proposed legislation will only be a risk to the future of our national medicine and an obstacle to the means we have at our disposal to guarantee medical care for those who need it.

Having heard all the speeches delivered on the subject in the House of Commons since the beginning of this debate, I am surprised at the little attention given to the economic aspect of this the bill and the consequences it will bring about.

Drug production in Canada is worth about \$150 million per year and that industry employs more than 10,000 workers, 2,500 of whom are university graduates. It is estimated that an equivalent number of Canadian workers earn their living by providing services and products directly connected with that industry.