

Patent Act—Trade Marks Act

be, that the drug he prescribes is of high quality.

How is the doctor to know that there is available a generic drug? He will not know it from the detail men, I know the detail men will not only not tell him about the generic drug but will do everything possible to convince the doctor that the generic drugs are not safe; that they are of poor quality; that they have not been properly standardized and all the rest of the horror tales that the medical profession has heard for years. The detail men who work for a particular company are like any other salesmen. They are like the Ford salesman who tells the prospective car buyer that Ford is the best car, or the Chrysler salesman who tells the same prospective buyer that Chrysler is the best car. This is what detail men do. This is their job, and I do not blame them for it.

An hon. Member: They are hucksters.

Mr. Orlikow: They are hucksters, exactly. How can the doctor know there is available a meprobamate or an antibiotic of high quality which is cheap? He can only know it if the department, which does not represent a particular company in the industry, has an information service. I do not mean the kind of information service that we are becoming accustomed to in this house, where every minister has his own P.R. man who is trying to convince the Canadian people that the minister is the best the department has ever had. I mean an information service that will distribute factual information to the doctors of this country.

What has happened? Again we are caught in this cost squeeze and do not have the money. When are these information bulletins going to be published? How will they be distributed? We do not know, because the poor minister is being told by the Minister of Finance (Mr. Benson) that he had better go slow because the government just does not have the money. I say, as I have said from the time the committee was first established, that the expenditure by the government of Canada of a relatively small amount of money would save tens of millions of dollars for the Canadian people. Having said that, Mr. Speaker, the house will understand that the proposals the government has implemented, those they are proposing today and those they still have to propose, are really not going to do very much to solve this problem.

I now want to speak very briefly about what we think ought to be done if we are to

[Mr. Orlikow.]

bring down the cost of prescription drugs. The details will be dealt with by some of my colleagues who will be speaking later in the debate. In my opinion, these specific proposals should be followed. Most of them have been proposed by others, by the people who worked for the Kefauver committee and people like Mr. Douglas Fullerton who is well known and cannot be radical about all things because he has had some pretty important appointments from the Liberal governments.

• (9:40 p.m.)

He went into this question pretty extensively and has made some specific proposals. I want to indicate some of the things which we think should be done if we are really serious about bringing the price of prescription drugs down for the Canadian consumers. First of all, we think that brand names for all new drugs should be abandoned and that new drugs should be used and sold through the use of the generic name. If there is one thing which we must keep in mind, it is that the doctor is the key to the prescriptions which are used. The patient has no choice. After the doctor sees the patient, he writes the prescriptions, and if he uses a brand name the druggist has no choice. The druggist must fill it in that way and the patient pays the increased price which can be two, three or ten times more. So, we think the government should bring in legislation prohibiting the use of brand names for new drugs.

Second, we believe that the provisions of the corporation income tax applying to manufacturers, importers and distributors should be amended so that a maximum of ten per cent of total sales should be the allowable deductible expense for advertising and sales promotion. This would immediately reduce the cost of prescription drugs by 20 cents in every dollar. These are the figures which we have from the pharmaceutical manufacturers themselves.

Third, we believe that drug advertising should be extensively scrutinized and legislation introduced to control drug advertising. Not a month goes by in which one does not read a report that in Canada, in the United States or in Great Britain a government authority charged with the responsibility of policing advertising in the field of drugs has issued an order to a drug company to cease using advertising which is misleading. The largest and most important drug companies have been involved in this kind of game.