

Food and Drugs Act

outlined and talked about could cost the government a great deal of money. However, I do not think, and I think no Canadian would think, that the necessary moneys would be misspent in order to ensure that future generations of Canadians be of sound body and mind.

(Translation):

Mr. Guy Marcoux (Quebec-Monimorency): Mr. Speaker, I do not wish to speak at length on the matter, although it is very interesting.

In fact, I believe that the whole story of thalidomide as well as of many other drugs, proves that the government is incapable of treating the sick.

An hon. Member: What does that mean?

Mr. Marcoux: It means that, at the present time, the people of Canada rely on the Department of National Health and Welfare because they believe that inside that department there are all the technical services needed to ensure the rational use of drugs and forbid their use if they are dangerous. Therefore, the population relies entirely on a government system that has proved ineffective.

I understand that it can hardly be otherwise. I understand it but that is exactly why we, in the Social Credit, always say that it is dangerous to give the government too much power when it is known that sometimes it can be used with difficulty.

It is very difficult indeed. People talk about drugs, about the danger in the use of certain drugs, and they might as well talk about the danger in certain elements that we find in nature and that are not even drugs.

There is sodium chloride, fluorine, elements which it is absolutely normal to find in nature. There is also iodine and many others. But they must be used in a scientific way and in a way that can be checked not only by governments but also by individuals themselves.

So I think that this legislation, beneficial in itself, merely reflects a situation that does not exist only in the case of drugs.

Incidentally, may I say a few words about fluorine? It is a well-known fact that fluorine is an element of nature. It is well known that many people insist that fluorine be used in drinking water, so as to avoid tooth decay. However, no inquiry is made generally concerning the effects fluorine has upon the system as a whole. Sometimes the department of health informed us that tests had

been made outside this country in this regard. Here, we were content, from what I know, to experiment on teeth and dentition. So, I wonder if that is not but another example of the chronic and customary incompetence of a government agency.

Naturally, I fully realize that this amendment may and should help to minimize the risks contained in any drug.

It is also known that certain other drugs are being used, as the hon. member for Halton (Mr. Harley) said a while ago. He referred to goof balls or barbiturates. Opiates could also be mentioned, as well as various other drugs, even digitalis for the heart. Used thoughtlessly, those drugs may be just as dangerous as thalidomide or LSD.

That is why I agree with the hon. member that we ought to study in committee everything that could be achieved through the Food and Drugs Act concerning the Canadian manufacture of such products, in relation to the colleges of physicians and surgeons of Canada and the colleges of pharmacists.

I noticed a while ago that the minister said that we know of at least one case where the drug was used after the notice of withdrawal of the drug had been given. He told us that it had been taken without prescription, without the knowledge of the attending physician. I think we could find many more examples of this example, if I may put it that way—

Mr. Rouleau: That is a repetition.

Mr. Marcoux: It is a repetition that underlines the first word, I do not want to accuse the pharmacists but one knows that some will sell drugs without prescription just because they feel they know enough to determine in which case a drug should be taken and in which case it should not be. I know personally of such cases, cases where some pharmacists sold drugs without prescription.

I think that what the minister discovered when he withdrew this drug from the market should give him a lead as to other investigations that should be undertaken on other drugs. I think that if likewise some doctors act in an unethical way, the same thing applies to some druggists.

I read that the number of thalidomide pills which were distributed in Canada, much exceeds the total quantity distributed in all Europe since the discovery of this drug. Per-