

Government Orders

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The New York Times in a recent article indicated that this was a tremendous coup for the drug companies which managed to insert in the North American trade agreement a provision that required Mexico and Canada to change the laws in those countries to prohibit the development of generic drugs in a timely manner. The provision now permits a 20 year patent on a product. In *The New York Times* article it estimated that by the end of the century it will cost \$1 billion out of the pockets of Canadians for international drug companies.

It is ironic that a Conservative government, in its dying days, would produce for its friends a \$1 billion gift in the next eight years. That \$1 billion gift is going to come out of provincial pharmacare plans, plans which provide reasonably priced pharmaceuticals to senior citizens and low income Canadians. This Conservative government, in the dying days of its mandate, is going to take that \$1 billion from Canadians and give it to Americans.

However, this is not the last movement of the international drug companies. The Canadian government health officials who recognize that they have been sold out or stabbed in the back by this Conservative government are going to attempt to set up a national formulary system which provides information on the cheapest possible alternatives on existing generics that can replace these high-priced brand name drugs. At the same time, the next target of the friends of this Conservative government—and I am sure we will see the bill before the House—is to stop the set-up and functioning of a national drug formulary to try and protect senior citizens until this outrageous piece of legislation can be abolished.

The paper quotes Gerald Mossinghoff, president of the Pharmaceutical Manufacturers Association in Washington, who states: "Members would like to eliminate Canada's government price controls. The American drug-makers also oppose drug formularies which are increasingly cutting into their profits in the United States as well as Canada". While there certainly is an obligation to move very quickly to set up those formularies to in turn protect Canadian citizens over this short period of time, there is also a critical obligation to get rid of this Conservative government, a government that would steal \$1 billion from Canadians in the lowest income

brackets and turn it over to the international drug companies.

It is an absolute embarrassment in Canada to watch the former Liberal cabinet minister strut back and forth across the country, Canada's chief dope pedlar if you will, putting in full-page ads selling the international brand name drugs. Take the last *Post* which was given to every member of Parliament and every physician across Canada. We get an idea of the current situation and how the companies are selling drugs. There is no information provided, just straight promotion and advertising to try to get physicians to prescribe and sell these high-priced products.

We ought to be moving in this House to immediately stop this kind of crap from being put in full-page articles in things like *The Medical Post*. It is an ironic thing that Maclean Hunter, a very honourable and long-time publishing company in Canada, can send around a rag like this, a rag that would make Lord Thomson smile in disbelief that somebody could exceed him in providing news that is simply there to separate the propaganda and advertising.

We should, through legislation, be abandoning the kind of advertising activity that the drug companies are doing in Canada. This is absolutely outrageous. In the current edition of *The Medical Post* there are 16 full pages of b.s. in that issue. Every physician in Canada gets it. It does not provide information about new drugs. It creates a dangerous situation where physicians are turned into individuals who simply convey these prescriptions through to people, often dangerous prescriptions. There has been mention of the research done by these drug companies in Canada. A good percentage of that research is simply undertaking testing that is required for marketing in the country. We would be getting that whether or not we passed this outrageous piece of legislation. They are required by law to do most of it.

The suggestion is that we should prohibit any promotional advertising by drug companies in newspapers or medical journals that does not provide absolute, clear, approved information. We are prepared to stop alcohol advertising. We are prepared to stop tobacco advertising. This is as dangerous to our health and it is as important to stop this as it is to stop those other products.