

*Patent Act**[Translation]*

Opposition Members know how important international trade is to Canada's economy. They always perform the same routine, never mind the fact that the Liberals did not do anything to improve our export competitiveness when they were at the helm. As a matter of fact they even tried to reduce it when they formed a coalition with the NDP in the course of the last decade.

If we want to attract the capital funds required to be competitive on the international scene, our country must convince foreigners that it is a good place to invest. The Canadian patent system must be geared to that of western countries just so our patents will be protected under international law. This issue does not relate exclusively to the drug industry, for it has an impact on all other sectors and it does enhance or tarnish Canada's reputation on the international scene.

In short, Mr. Speaker, we are talking about the basic reasons which justify some of the amendments advocated in Bill C-22. Now, if I may, I should like to refer to some of the questions raised by opposition Members in their attempt to defeat a sound policy with a view to polishing their image in public political polls. Again I must emphasize that the Progressive Conservative Government is not trying to implement this policy for the sake of gaining popular support. We are doing this because it is the right way to protect the future of Canada.

• (1210)

[English]

Let me deal with what seems on the surface to be the facts to many thousands of Canadians who have signed petitions opposing our policy. I freely admit that thousands have done so. The Leader of the New Democratic Party (Mr. Broadbent) indicated at the beginning of this year that over 20,000 Canadians had signed such petitions. I do not argue with that number, but I should point out that I have many, many thousands of petitions here indicating that we should proceed with the legislation. I have not bothered to waste the time of the House by introducing them. These petitions were sent to me by disgruntled Canadians faced with the so-called information provided by Hon. Members opposite and the facts provided by me.

The Opposition petition was sent far and wide by the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond (Mr. Dingwall). This petition is a marvellous piece of double-speak because it totally ignores what the policy is really about and plays only on raising fears in Canadian consumers. The petition indicates that the policy will directly affect all Canadians not protected by private or government medicare programs, will raise the costs of already high provincial health care programs and will prevent competition, increase drug prices and severely restrict the ability of average Canadians to buy necessary drugs. It says that the policies are another example of the Government's

concessions to the United States at the expense of every-day Canadians.

I am not sure what an every-day Canadian is or how he or she differs from an average Canadian, but every premise contained in that petition is absolutely false. It raises fear and concern about the ability of Canadians to protect their own health and that of their families, without any proof. It raises fear over the inability of Canadians to afford the drugs they need, without any proof. It suggests that provincial health care plans will be adversely affected in the face of the protection the federal Government is providing for these plans and in the face of evidence presented before the committee by the head of the drug plan in Saskatchewan indicating that he did not think it would cost them anything. It brings in the ogre of the big, bad United States so the Liberals can wrap their concerns around the Canadian flag, again with nothing to back them up.

If I were not a Member of the House and I did not know what this issue was all about, I would sign a petition like that myself. However, let me quote from letters I have received relating to these very petitions distributed by the Hon. Member opposite and, I am sure, by many of his colleagues. I have answered all the people who have signed these petitions, not in the interests of politics but in the interests of telling the truth. One such letter reads:

Dear Sir,

Your recent letter regarding amendments to the Patent Act refers to a petition signed by me. I am unaware of reading or signing any such petition and would ask you to forward a copy of the petition, along with my signature, to my attention.

Yes, that is the kind of letter I got in return to the letters I sent out to people who had signed petitions sent around the country by the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond. Another letter reads as follows:

I agree wholeheartedly that amendments are necessary to encourage pharmaceutical research in Canada; I trust that you will press on with the passage of this legislation.

To set the record straight, however, I did not sign a petition in opposition to changes in patent protection.

Yes, I received other letters like that. Perhaps the following is the most telling of all, and, to be fair, this one was in response to an NDP petition, not a Liberal petition, though I am sure they come out of the same Gestetner machine somewhere in the Centre Block. This letter reads as follows:

I received your information letter recently.

Yes, I did sign a petition against the Bill.

However, having read all the information, I am now in favour of it.

Go ahead.

I want to read from a final letter in order to drive just one more nail in the coffin in which the Hon. Member's dead policy lies. This letter is from the Dean of the Faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences at the University of British Columbia and is addressed to the Hon. Member for Cape Breton—East Richmond, not to me. It reads in part: