

Oral Questions

Mr. Broadbent: Where were you at Cabinet, Lloyd?

Some Hon. Members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Speaker: Order, please. I would ask that all Hon. Members refrain from extending the enthusiasm of the weekend throughout the entire Question Period.

GOVERNMENT POSITION

Hon. Lloyd Axworthy (Winnipeg—Fort Garry): Mr. Speaker, my supplementary is for the same Minister. Can the Minister explain to the House why the Government is not scheduled to make representations to the Commerce Department's public hearings which begin this week on the softwood lumber case? Has the Government indeed abandoned its position? Why is it not appearing before the public hearings when all other parties to this bid will be appearing there and the case will be judged based upon these representations? Why are we not in front of that tribunal making the case for Canada?

Right Hon. Joe Clark (Secretary of State for External Affairs): Mr. Speaker, the position of the Government of Canada supported by the vast majority of the provinces, and certainly very actively by the spokesmen of the labour union involved in this issue, is to try to seek an arrangement that will bring stability to the Canadian forest industry and stop the possibility of our losing literally hundreds of millions of dollars. Insofar as public debates and hearings are concerned, I am quite prepared to arrange immediately a public hearing so that we can learn the views of the Member for Saint-Henri—Westmount on the position put forward on trade by the Member for Winnipeg—Fort Garry.

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PHARMACEUTICAL INDUSTRY

REQUEST THAT PRIME MINISTER MEET WINDSOR RETIREES TO DISCUSS AMENDING LEGISLATION

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, my question is directed to the Right Hon. Prime Minister. During the period when the Government was considering the deindexation of old age pensions the Prime Minister met with senior citizens, to the benefit of his edification and the withdrawal of that legislation. My question to him is simply this. There are some retirees coming from Windsor and other cities who would like to discuss the Patent Act with him. Will he meet with them tomorrow?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, I know that the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs has met with various groups that have views on this Bill.

Mr. Orlikow: Like the drug companies?

Mr. Epp (Provencher): Not only the drug companies. I have met with senior citizens. I have met with the drug companies and senior citizens, and I have met with others. So I say to the Member for Winnipeg North Centre, yes, we will meet with those groups, and we are willing to have discussions with them as well. There is always a balance between trying to protect the ability to have access to drug plans, as well as the balance on the other side for research and development, so that Canada can be at the leading edge of health technology.

• (1440)

POSITION OF SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Howard McCurdy (Windsor—Walkerville): Mr. Speaker, I think there has been some mistake. My question was directed to the Prime Minister. Will he meet with retirees and senior citizens, or should we have a little old lady guard the front door of the House to accost him as he was accosted last time to have the Government consider the interest of Canadians, rather than constant obsequiousness in the face of American pressure?

Hon. Jake Epp (Minister of National Health and Welfare): Mr. Speaker, that kind of proposition is preposterous and is very dangerous because people of all ages expect the best health care. I have letters from people who want new drugs. New drugs help to save lives. Let us get on with it and start having some optimism about ourselves, our country, and our future.

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COMMUNICATIONS

VOLUNTEER FIRE DEPARTMENTS—RADIO LICENCE FEES

Mr. Gerald Comeau (South West Nova): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Communications. Some time ago I made representations to the Minister on behalf of the volunteer fire departments of Canada. It had been proposed by her Department that volunteer fire departments be required to pay individual licensing fees for their two-way radios. This would have added substantial costs to the operations of the volunteer fire departments. Has the Minister been able to resolve the matter and continue the previous practice of charging one licensing fee?

Hon. Flora MacDonald (Minister of Communications): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Hon. Member for South West Nova for his representations on this issue. Indeed, I have received representations on the issue from a number of other Members. I should like to advise him and the House that I have decided to defer for the time being any changes to the regulations as they apply to radio licence fees for municipalities and volunteer fire departments.

Some Hon. Members: Hear, hear!