

situation will now develop into a permanent \$1 charge on welfare recipients. May I point out also that the 20 per cent drop in usage simply means in plain English that patients cannot afford now to pay that \$1 charge so that the use of the drugs they need is dropping.

On its side, the provincial government appears to be quite happy to sit back and do nothing except advertise to social assistance people that the drugs listed in the drug benefit list, that is drugs available to welfare recipients at commercial drug stores, are also available at the provincial pharmacy without charge to such patients. That this does not solve the whole problem is evident. There is only one such provincial pharmacy to serve the whole province, and it is in East Vancouver. To visit it, many Vancouver residents would have to spend several hours going and coming and use two bus fares. These are simple drawbacks unless one is elderly, sick and poor, which so many of these people are. People outside Vancouver must rely on the mails. In many cases they would possibly be dead of old age before the medicine arrived, so they have to give in and pay the \$1 fee to get their prescriptions filled locally.

In this age of moon landings it just is not good enough for the pharmacists' society or the provincial government or the federal Department of Consumer and Corporate Affairs, which is supposed to protect consumers, to wash their hands and say: Well, the welfare recipients are now paying the shot, or going without, so why should we worry? Action is needed now. Again I ask the minister: Has he now received a report on this matter from the combines branch, and if so, has the pharmacists' society the legal right to fix this \$1 charge on the prescriptions paid by welfare recipients throughout British Columbia?

Mr. Stanley Haidasz (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Consumer and Corporate Affairs): I recall that the hon. member, during the adjournment debate on April 28, raised the same question of the \$1 surcharge by the members of the B.C. Professional Pharmacists Society to welfare recipients for prescription drugs. At that time I assured the hon. member that I shared her concern with respect to the high cost of drugs and also proper medical care for people who need it most. I went on to remind the house of the government's five point program designed to reduce the cost of drugs to Canadians, an

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important feature of which was Bill C-102 which received Royal Assent on June 27.

With respect to the \$1 surcharge, I also confirmed on April 28 that the minister received a letter from the Honourable Dan Campbell, Minister of Social Welfare in British Columbia, asking for a combines investigation. I also stated that the matter had been referred to the combines branch. I explained that the director then had the matter under review to ascertain whether there was reason to believe the Combines Investigation Act had been violated.

As the house is aware, it is not the practice to disclose whether formal inquiry under the act into a particular firm or industry has been undertaken. However, since that time it has become public knowledge, through sources outside our department, that a senior officer of the director's staff attended at the department of social welfare in Victoria and Vancouver early in May. In accordance with the usual practice, however, no information is given about inquiries in progress, unless and until a report is published or some other public proceeding has been taken pursuant to the act. It can be safely stated now, Mr. Speaker, that this matter is properly in hand in accordance with the provisions of the statute.

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE—EGGS—GOVERNMENT ACTION
TO PROTECT CANADIAN PRODUCER
FROM IMPORTS

Mr. Adrien Lambert (Bellechasse): Mr. Speaker, on July 7th last, I put a question to the Minister of Industry, Trade and Commerce (Mr. Pepin) concerning a specific problem which Canadian egg producers are now facing.

That industry has become most important and provides employment to a large number of people. It is now going through an increasingly difficult period. The cost of production is going up while the cost of eggs has gone down considerably since January 1st, 1969.

According to the official figures that have been published, grade A large eggs retailed at 67.3 cents in January 1969; today their retail price is 55.7 cents. The price has gone down constantly since the beginning of the year.

Eggs are being imported in increasing quantities. For instance, almost a million dozen eggs were imported from the United States during the weeks of May 11 and May 18 alone. In the first few months in 1969, or rather during the month of December 1968, 268,400 dozens were imported. During the