

Patent Act

Mr. McCurdy: We will check the "blues", and if there has been an inadvertent injection of a word that seems to change the intent of what I said, let me make it clear. We will support the amendments, and then I suspect we can all go home.

I find it curious but characteristic that a Government that would refuse to reject the attribution of Nazism to those who oppose its actions would revert to Fascist Italy to find examples for an additional attack.

Mr. McDermid: The Government did not say that.

Mr. McCurdy: I guess it is just a search for identification with those who, in many respects, have a closer identification with their philosophy than with ours.

However, I must say that I am not entirely clear on what it is that Italy under Mussolini was supposed to have done or not to have done. I am not entirely clear what socialist Governments are supposed to have done or not to have done. However, let us just say this: Canadians were proud of the fact that we had a unique regime in respect of patented drugs and generic drugs, which had as its function some measure of control of intellectual property but the balance of which was on the side of serving the people of this country rather than foreign-owned pharmaceutical companies that would exploit the poor and the sick.

Perhaps they have forgotten how this piece of legislation originated. This is how it originated. The President of the United States came to Quebec City. He was sitting there talking with the Prime Minister (Mr. Mulroney), and the President said: "Look, Brian, you have got to do something about it. You are giving drugs to sick people cheap and it has got to stop".

We have had a lot of bleating and complaining that none of this had anything to do with the free trade agreement. However, we know, they know, and Canadians know that this is a Government which has not been able to identify for whom it is supposed to work. I will tell him for whom it is supposed to work. It is for the Canadian people.

If they say that this Bill is going to produce research, then they ought to accept that there should be guarantees that that research will be done. If they say that they are going to control prices, then they ought to accept amendments which would ensure that that will be the case.

If the Hon. Parliamentary Secretary has difficulty understanding that or understanding our intent, let me repeat it for him one more time. We have a couple of minor amendments which make a lot of sense from the Government's point of view. We still do not like this legislation, but if we accept those amendments—and we will vote for them—then I suspect that we will all be able to go home, on this particular matter, with some degree of satisfaction that at least the Government has tried to live up to its promises.

Mr. Ernie Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): Mr. Speaker, it is always a pleasure to join, with limited time to anticipate the

experience, in a debate in the House. It is not that this is a Bill about which we do not know anything. After all, Bill C-22 has been troubling the Parliament of Canada and the people of Canada for many months, since the Conservative Government came into office in 1984 and began breaking election promises and began damaging the interests of the Canadian people.

I want to take a few moments to consider the unseemly history of the particular Bill by way of taking a position. I see before me a most unlikely—

Mr. McDermid: Well, you look so lonely over here all by yourself.

Mr. Epp (Thunder Bay—Nipigon): My friend from the other side has crossed over to sit in our area. It leaves me a little uneasy, but I am never troubled by being alone. New Democrats have had a long history of small numbers, but of course things look different these days partly because of legislation of the sort at which we are looking in Bill C-22.

The history of this Bill has been a very, very strange one. We have a Bill which the Government claims it brought forward because of its own understanding of it being in the national interest. On the other side, we have made charges that the Bill exists for one reason alone, that is, to satisfy the demands of American interests, multinational pharmaceutical companies that have resented the fact that the Parliament of Canada decided in 1969 to protect the interests of Canadians by ensuring that drugs could be made available in generic copies to Canadians at lower prices than pharmaceutical manufacturers which had developed the drugs were continuing to sell them, long after they had recouped development costs and should have in fact been reducing the prices in order to save consumers money.

In 1969 Canadians found themselves, and I would submit that they continue to do so, in a situation in which pharmaceutical companies will continue doing their research and all important work far from our shores. It will be done near the headquarters of the various companies.

We have had a promise held out, the only possible element in the proposal which could be in the national interest, that there will be research done in Canada that will create jobs. Of course we have dealt with the particular suggestion in the past that this will be important employment. I see the Minister, who has had involvement with science and technology before, and I see others from various provinces of Canada on the other side. They know that there is a great desire in the Montreal area to have some of this employment. We have the strongest suspicions that the kind of work that will be done will be in the way of consumer testing to satisfy the licensing authorities that the drugs are safe and so on. The basic research required in pharmaceutical development will not take place in Canada.

● (1740)

The question of where the Bill fits in involves far more than the question of what its importance will be to employment in