

European Communities

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ORAL QUESTION (O-24/75)

with debate, pursuant to Rule 47 of the Rules of Procedure
by Mr LAGORCE on behalf of the Socialist Group
to the Commission of the European Communities

Subject: Abuses and fraudulent practices of the major
pharmaceutical laboratories in Europe

More and more works and press articles are being published
denouncing the serious abuses and fraudulent practices of
the major multinational laboratories in Europe¹.

On the one hand these laboratories are putting on the
market useless and even dangerous products claiming them
to be innovative and subjecting the consumer to a barrage
of publicity. On the other hand, they frequently arrange
among themselves to fix prohibitive prices and take
advantage of the lack of European legislation to deflect
the flow of trade between Member States.

It is estimated that 90% of the medicaments put on the
market each year are simply old products in a different
guise which make absolutely no contribution to medical
science. The pharmaceutical industries thus help to feed
inflation. The health of the consumer seems at present
to be the least of their concerns. The problem is

¹See 'le médicament malade du profit' by P.M. Doutrelant in
English Edition 'Le Monde' of 15, 17 and 19 April 1975

complicated by the fact that some of these leading laboratories are situated in Switzerland or in the U.S. and the enormous profits made are passed through 'tax havens'.

Now, it often happens that the national bodies responsible for the control of medicaments are unable to discharge their task properly, owing to their lack of resources. This is particularly the case in a country like France.

It is for these reasons that, in most of our Member States, there is a growing body of opinion in favour of stamping out the abuses detected and even calling in some cases for the nationalization of the pharmaceutical industries to achieve this aim.

1. Does the Commission not feel, as we do, that, in view of the volume of capital involved and the magnitude of the profits made in this sector, the situation on the European market in pharmaceutical products demands urgent action on its part?
2. Does the Commission not consider it necessary and urgent as a first step, to apply Articles 85 and 86 of the EEC Treaty in the sector of pharmaceutical products?
3. Does the Commission not consider it also necessary to strengthen Community legislation in this area, by means of directives more strictly regulating the conditions under which medicaments are manufactured, the fixing of their prices, their introduction on the market, their presentation, the publicity they enjoy, their distribution and rigorous tests to determine not only their efficacy but also their non-toxicity?