

Mr. STETLER. I think there should be hearings.

Senator JAVITS. I think that's extremely helpful. And probably any proposal on this subject would come to the Labor and Public Welfare Committee—thus giving us a chance to get at it.

Senator NELSON. The point the Senator makes is a very good one from a consumer's standpoint. I am not frozen into any position as to what I think ought to be in a compendium. But one item that might be in there—I think the Senator would be interested—is the price of each drug listed, and, of course, FDA must be equipped with the personnel to properly inspect plants and assure quality control. If you did that, when a doctor opened up the compendium and found 22 prednisones, or 50 or 75 reserpines listed or something else, he would know that FDA has quality-control checks, that all drugs meet USP standards, and that FDA has given them all a stamp of approval. I think the doctor would be pretty likely, unless he had specific clinical experience that somehow would persuade him otherwise—to look at that compendium, see the FDA approval, have confidence in the quality-control program that is being supervised, and prescribe the drug that is most economical for the patient.

I suppose that the industry would object violently to that, because they like to get into the marketplace and advertise, and even after the patent runs out have so imprinted the name of the drug in the doctor's mind that he is going to prescribe it even though there are equivalents on the market. I don't blame the companies for that, but that, in fact, does happen.

Mr. STETLER. Senator, you know from our statement that we have made the point, and I make it very sincerely, that I think more price information should be made available to the doctor and to the public.

I know you have written to a lot of people and a lot of companies to ask about their views on a compendium, so that a bill could be perfected. But on this issue of price—and I want to tell you I am not opposed to price information being distributed. But consider for a minute whether price is a proper ingredient of a compendium.

Are we talking about manufacturers and retail prices in the compendium? If the former, would the prices of the hundreds of manufacturers that are in this business be shown? If it is retail—I don't know how we could keep up in a compendium with the day-to-day, store-to-store differences in price or how it would be shown and kept up to date.

Senator NELSON. As I say, I don't have a rigid position on that, because I don't know. It is worth considering. And, as you are well aware, under the present law no prescription drug can go onto the market in America and comply with the law unless it complies with USP standards.

You shake your head?

Mr. CUTLER. I am shaking my head, sir, because while it is a violation of law for drugs to go on the market under those circumstances, the FDA is in no position to assure that it does not happen. It can and it does happen.

For example, the FDA today has no inspection or registration procedure for foreign plants—a very difficult problem, of course. But they don't. They don't have any idea whether those drugs entering this country do meet these standards, except on a spot check basis.